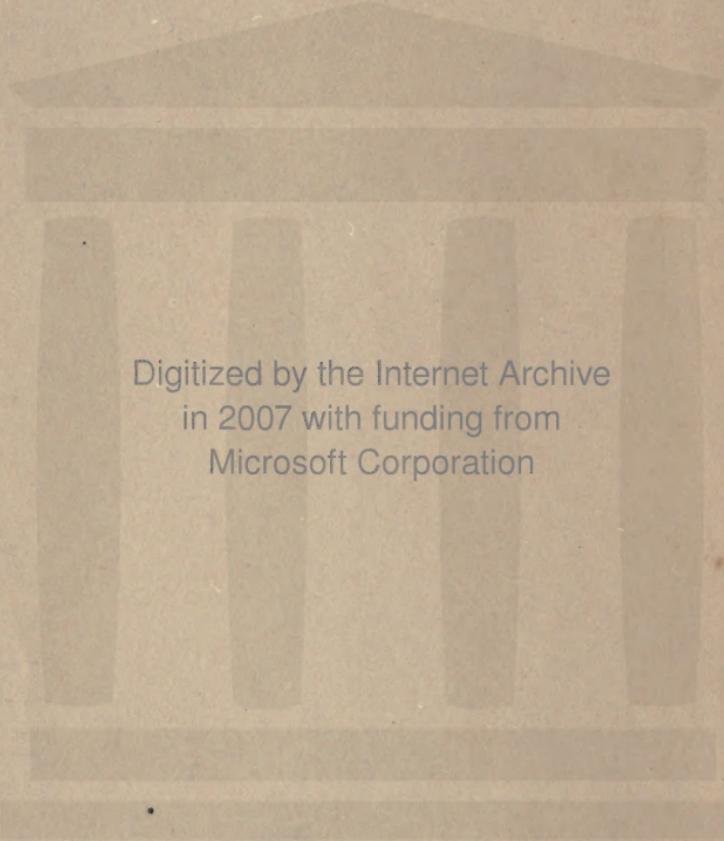


I-WALKED-IN-ARDEN





Mrs. D. Sinclair



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I WALKED
IN ARDEN

NEW BORZOI NOVELS
SPRING, 1922

WANDERERS

Knut Hamsun

MEN OF AFFAIRS

Roland Pertwee

THE FAIR REWARDS

Thomas Beer

I WALKED IN ARDEN

Jack Crawford

GUEST THE ONE-EYED

Gunnar Gunnarsson

THE LONGEST JOURNEY

E. M. Forster

CY THEREA

Joseph Hergesheimer

EXPLORERS OF THE DAWN

Mazo de la Roche

THE WHITE KAMI

Edward Alden Jewell

I WALKED IN ARDEN

JACK CRAWFORD



NEW YORK

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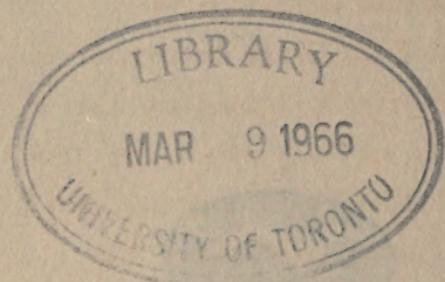
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CONTENTS

CHAPTER

- I I BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING, 3
- II I SET OUT ALONG A NEW TRAIL, 11
- III I CAMP IN THE DESERT, 22
- IV I HAVE MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH PROSPERO, 40
- V I ENTER DEEP HARBOR SOCIETY, 61
- VI I GO FOR A RIDE ON SATAN, 33
- VII I HAVE THE FIRST GREAT ADVENTURE, 98
- VIII I PLAY A PART IN A MELODRAMA, 116
- IX I COME FACE TO FACE WITH THE FUTURE, 136
- X WE SHARE OUR FIRST CHRISTMAS, 160
- XI WE SEEK AND OBTAIN CONSENT, 173
- XII WE PASS AN ORDEAL AND SAIL FOR HOME, 192
- XIII WE ARRIVE AND LOOK FORWARD TO ANOTHER ARRIVAL,
214
- XIV WE FIND NEW LIFE AND NEW LOVE, 228
- XV WE BEGIN TO LIVE, 249
- XVI WE HEAR SENTENCE PRONOUNCED, 265
- XVII WE STAND AT THE CROSS-ROADS, 284
- EPILOGUE. CHRISTMAS, 1918, 294

CHAPTER ONE

I BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING

I HARDLY know where to begin, because, as I grow older, I find it more and more difficult to know what really is the beginning of anything. Causes are all mixed up, and things that seem afterwards to have a bearing were not at the time important enough to be noted. And it is probably ten to one that some factors have been completely forgotten. I suppose nobody can tell all of what happened or tell any of it with absolute accuracy. At least, as I look on at life, any attempt to record it on paper seems hopeless. Things happen, you don't know why—and you try to use your judgment while they are happening, but even if you are very clever, you don't know whether your judgment was the best judgment. All you can observe is how things end—when they do end.

And yet I know that character—whatever that is—probably is more important than circumstances. There's an old vulgar song, something about, "It isn't what you do, it's how you take things." These aren't the words, but that is the idea. It's the same thing that my father used to say to me: "Play fair, Ted—and then if you lose, why, you must grin and bear it." I know this isn't a novel philosophy; it is a useful one. Original ideas are not necessarily helpful. An honest platitude has better sticking powers.

I must try to tell a little about the beginning. My name is Edward Jevons and I was born in New York City, but I have never had the pleasure of living in what, for lack of a better term, I shall call my native town. At the age of six, when Her Majesty Queen Victoria was seated upon the comfortable

throne of those days, I was taken by my father and mother to live in England. From the age of six to the age of eighteen I was a cockney and grew up in London. In all that time my eyes did not see America.

I have nothing but pleasant memories of this childhood in London. We were not a fashionable family; we knew nothing of the wealthy Anglo-American set in London; but we had a comfortable house out Hampstead way, and, as the saying is, "did ourselves rather well." We also had a little villa in the country, near a golf-course, in Hertfordshire. The country place we rented for the summers.

My father was a business man, but he had tried his hand, in earlier life, at writing—I believe with some success. Business was more profitable than writing—and he abandoned the latter. He kept up, however, many of his literary friendships, and our house was frequented by writers of more or less fame and a few theatre people. I thus became early infected with a desire to write—a wish which my father encouraged. He took a good deal of pains over training me in observation and in arousing in me what he called, "a curiosity about life"—without which, he said, no one could write anything worth while. In the evenings I would bring him my day's work and he would discuss it seriously with me over a pipe.

My early recollections of my mother are more vague. She was a woman of strong will who rather frightened me with her direct ways of getting what she wanted. Instead of waiting to see what would happen, she took a hand in making things happen to suit her. I could never quite approve the energy she put into having her own way. My way never seemed to me important enough to make a special fuss over getting it. One could always think to please one's self—which was a happier solution than to try to do the impossible. I was always shy in my mother's presence. She, on the other hand, had a ferocious devotion to me that was terrifying. I can remember being scolded and wept over for my coldness. It wasn't that; I couldn't explain things. I don't know whether my fa-

ther understood me—sometimes I thought he did and at other times I was certain he did not. I was an only son.

My sister, Frances, was much younger. I liked her very much—except when she interfered with the things in my room (I am speaking now as I remember her when a child), and then we quarrelled gorgeously. My mother always took my part, and poor Frances would end in tears. Secretly I enjoyed Frances' obvious hero-worship and the fact that I could make her cry. I was skilled in subtle ways of bullying her—teasing is perhaps a better word. Frances is one of the few persons who has ever taken me seriously. As a boy I took advantage of this to harrow her feelings. She was not, however, an important part of my life, because of the difference in our ages.

My education was rather a haphazard affair. An amiable young man was my tutor, and he did his best to make me believe arithmetic a useful branch of knowledge. He did not convince me. I tolerated his efforts and got along fairly well. I read a great deal for myself; there were always plenty of new books in the house, and my father's library of standard works was larger than even an industrious reader could get through. I absorbed a good deal of literary background without being aware I was storing up anything. Like other boys, I read for amusement—only it happened that I was amused by a fairly wide range of authors. I knew few children my own age and was not particularly interested in those I did know. They did not read much.

It was at the beginning of my eighteenth year that my father called me into his study one night and informed me that he planned sending me to America to college. The announcement was a great surprise to me, for I was happy where I was, and I could remember little about America.

There was another surprise in my father's proposal. It appeared that I was to be trained as a manufacturing chemist. My father pointed out that he needed an expert chemist in the future development of his business and had decided to make

me that man. I remember I protested, pointing out to him my ambition to become a writer. My protest was overruled. My father said something about bread and butter coming first and added that chemistry need not keep me from writing.

I went to America and spent four years at a small college in one of the Eastern States—Hilltown University, it was called. They were not wholly happy years, for I found myself in the awkward predicament of being, because of my foreign upbringing, a stranger among my classmates. I did not make friends easily, but on the whole, I got through creditably. Summer holidays during these four years I spent in England with the family.

I was graduated and ready to join my father in his London business. For a year I worked away at the practical side of chemistry, and to my inward astonishment, my work appeared to give satisfaction. Indeed, I was entrusted more and more with tasks of responsibility and, according to reports, acquitted myself well. I could never quite believe that I was really a chemist. Sometimes I would sit, in the evening, before my toy theatre and, while in the act of composing a play with its doubtful aid, wonder if I were the person who went to the laboratory every morning and worked at chemistry. My writing made little progress; the curtain of my toy theatre was more often down than up, because, as my work increased in difficulty, chemistry claimed more and more of my time.

I think Sims, my mother's maid and formerly my old nurse, understood how I felt.

"The dust do be gettin' that thick on some of your books, Master Ted. You'll 'ave to let me 'ave a go at them one of these days."

Sims's expressions of sympathy were always veiled in household threats. And then there was Chitty, an ex-soldier and one-time officer's batman, who washed apparatus for me in the laboratory. To Chitty the processes of chemistry were akin to mediaeval incantations, and it was clear that he regarded me as out of my element in having anything to do with them.

When we—my father and I, that is—went away week-ends to play golf, Chitty left the laboratory and accompanied us in the capacity of handy man valet. He had a large family and definite views about the fitness of things. A gentleman following a chemical career he considered as at variance with the natural order.

"It isn't as if you was born, sir, to earning a living," he confided to me one afternoon when I had cursed an unsuccessful experiment. (It was an amiable weakness of Chitty's to believe that no one that he called a "gentleman" was under any actual necessity of working.) "Why don't you chuck it, sir, for today and come out and 'ave a round of golf?"

Possibly his advice was not always disinterested, but I believe it was. Next to my sister's, Chitty's hero-worship of me was the most profound I have known. In fact, as I think things over, these are the only two to whom I was ever a hero. Many have liked me; they had faith in me. But I am wandering, as usual.

It was late in June of my twenty-third year, and exactly twelve months after my graduation into the world of chemistry, that my father called me into his study, one morning as I was about to leave for the laboratory.

"Sit down, Ted," he said. "I've got some news for you."

I sat down hopefully, wondering if at last he had recognized that I was very unhappy over my chemistry. "Possibly," I thought, "I shall be relieved and allowed to take up writing."

"What do you say to a run over to New York to look at some new business that has cropped up there? I'm thinking of sailing Saturday and taking you with me."

I was disappointed, but there seemed nothing alarming in the suggestion, so I readily agreed.

My mother and sister saw us off at Euston, with old Sims curtseying in the background and Chitty saluting in military fashion.

On the way over my father walked the decks many hours with me and told me of all his business hopes and fears. He

had got together all his available capital and was contemplating investing it in an American plant. The company was to be organized in London, with an American branch, and he was looking forward to putting me, ultimately, at the head of the whole thing. Meanwhile the new company had to be built up and to fight its own way against competition. We were to consider, in New York, what he regarded as a favourable offer of a factory which had been made him.

Although I had been in and out of New York many times while an undergraduate at Hilltown, I could never get over a feeling of strange awe at its noise and confusion. In London I was at home; in New York I felt alien and wondered how anybody could feel as if he belonged there. "Luckily," I thought, as we rode down-town on the elevated, "we shan't be here long." I had a return steamer ticket for Liverpool in an inside pocket. It was a question of closing a business transaction and returning.

At the office where we went, I was introduced to a Mr. Knowlton, our electrical engineer, who, my father told me, was to be our American manager. He was a shrewd looking man in the early thirties—possibly the late thirties, I couldn't be certain—with crow's feet about the eyes and a disconcerting grin. I saw him look at me sharply out of the corners of his eyes.

The lawyers proclaimed the situation satisfactory and I heard Knowlton give my father his technical opinion concerning the merits of the Deep Harbor Manufacturing Company, which was the name of the property we had come to see about. The factory was situated at Deep Harbor, a thriving factory town on one of the Great Lakes. On the strength of the two reports my father signed the papers, and the Deep Harbor Manufacturing Company became ours.

We were about to leave, when Knowlton turned to my father and said: "By the way, Mr. Jevons, I should like your authority, before you go, to employ a young research chemist

for our laboratory out there at the plant. Some one capable of original work."

As Knowlton uttered these words a panic seized me. I knew before my father spoke what he was going to suggest.

"What about letting you have my son here?" I heard my father say. I could feel Knowlton looking me over, and I prayed for an unfavourable verdict.

"Have you had much experience in research work?" Knowlton levelled at me.

"Only a year," I faltered, wishing I could say "None."

Several other searching questions followed, which I answered as best I could. There was a moment's silence, during which I joyfully concluded that Knowlton did not care much for the look of me. It is difficult, now, to explain, but I did not want to go to Deep Harbor. My whole life, with the exception of the four years at college, had been spent in London, and I had no wish to be in any other place.

"Well," I heard Knowlton say, at last. "It is up to you, Mr. Jevons. I guess your son will fit the job."

My father turned to me.

"It's a heavy responsibility for you, Ted—but I had rather trust you than a stranger. We've got a lot at stake—in fact, all we've got in the world is at stake. Will you do it?"

I looked about the room vaguely, as if I expected to find an avenue of escape miraculously open before me. Instead, I saw Knowlton's shrewd face watching me. I felt an utter loathing and fear of the task laid upon me; yet I did not know how to refuse.

I stammered out at last: "I'll do my best, sir"—an empty-sounding formula to commit one to so much. Instinctively I knew that in uttering these words I was altering the whole course of my life.

My father was delighted by my reply. He shook me warmly by the hand and clapped me on the back.

"Ted, I know you. You'll make good out there. You've got to. And when you have, why, then you can come back to England and be your own boss."

Thus the matter was settled, without time for reflection.

That evening my father spent in giving me advice and further business details. The next morning he sailed for England again, and I was left behind to join Knowlton at the Grand Central Station at five o'clock, when the Limited was to leave that should carry us to Deep Harbor.

"The future is a terrifying thing," I thought as I went to bed that night.

CHAPTER Two

I SET OUT ALONG A NEW TRAIL

SUNSET over the Hudson after a July thunderstorm; the observation platform of a Pullman, rushing toward a new and unknown world in the Middle West—such was the first stage of the trail leading to the heart of romance. Of course I did not know this then. In fact, the beauty of the sunset was considerably marred by the thought that the day before I had seen my father off for “home,” for England, while I had been condemned to indefinite exile in a lake town famous for its manufacturing; and I felt much like the hero at the end of a certain type of Greek tragedy. No one could say when I should see England again, or once more browse along the bookstalls of Charing Cross Road, or drink a glass of stout at Scott’s in Leicester Square. Not high ideals to long for, perhaps—but Charing Cross Road, the Empire on Leicester Square, or the noon-hour walks in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, pausing perhaps for a quarter of an hour at the Soame Museum, or venturing as far as Chancery Lane, seemed to epitomize the things for which I was desperately homesick.

It had strained my loyalty to my father to the breaking point to accept the test he had put upon me. No word, however, of my resentment, of my sullen hatred for the task, had I allowed him to guess. He had gone aboard the steamer in one of his moods of extreme optimism—business would flourish as it never had before now I was to be at the helm. I had looked ruefully at the cancelled steamer ticket in my hand and had resolved to try, but in very truth I was sick at heart. As the boat left the dock, I turned away with some boyish tears in my eyes—and they were bitter tears. I hated and loathed, at that moment, the fate that had condemned

me to the new venture. The roar and clang of the streets about the docks seemed symbols of all that was unlovely, of all that stood between me and what I wanted to do—symbols of the things I was to be mixed up with, no one knew for how long. Until I made the new business a success! It was easy to say—easy even for my father to pat me on the back and speak diffidently, as he looked the other way, of his confidence in me. He had so much more in me than I had in myself! I knew my own dangerous lack of ambition—my fondness for remaining a spectator, for doffing the world aside and bidding it pass; and here I was, entrusted with his future and that of my mother and sister.

What a plague had I to do with a factory and a manufacturing town on the Great Lakes? I knew nothing of either. All I asked was the moon—London, books, theatres, and the gorgeous solitude of rummaging in an enchanted cockney world. But that world could not be had, even in its simplest form, without money, and money I had to win in order to earn my right to the moon. There was nothing I had ever felt so incapable of winning. I knew I was full of a kind of inertia that terrified me. It would not matter to fail alone in such a task, but my failure would ruin my father—and others. And the inertia, the indifference, the hatred of it all frightened me. I knew it was no mood for success; yet I did not know how to fight against it.

"Now, Ted," said a crisp voice beside me, "we reach Deep Harbor at five-thirty A. M. That will give us time for breakfast, and get out to the factory by seven—when the whistle blows."

"Good heavens!" I thought with a start, coming back to the Pullman and reality with a horrible jerk. "Seven—" but words failed me.

"You'll have a chance to glance around the machine shop and pick out a location for the testing laboratory before the office force get down. Then we can have a look at the orders on the books and start making plans."

No time to get one's breath, no chance to edge into the cold

water inch by inch—the thing was to be done at once. I was to jump from that Pullman platform into the deepest, coldest part of the stream.

“As soon as we’ve passed Storm King we’ll go into the smoker and make a rough sketch of the laboratory lay-out, so we’ll be ready for them in the morning.”

I thought again of the ocean liner plunging in the opposite direction, and what my father was thinking at that moment. How had he dared trust me?

“Pshaw,” said my companion, reading my thoughts with startling accuracy. “The Middle West isn’t a bad place. You’ll soon get used to it. Of course, it isn’t Broadway,” he added, with a sidelong look at me, “but you’ll shake down all right. What do you think of the Hudson River? Nothing like this in England, I’ll bet.”

“Have you ever been there?” I parried.

“No. Little Old New York’s good enough for me. I like live ones—not dead ones. There’s Storm King over there—can you beat it? Look at the light over it—gosh, it’s enough to make a fellow feel queer.”

I looked; and the latter part of his remark was undoubtedly true. The thunder clouds still hung about in broken, irregular masses, through which radiated a startling copper glow, tapering off at the upper edges into green. The mountain itself was a dark shape sharply cut against the light side, while, beneath, the river was oily brass. All that was unknown, even sinister, was bound up in fearful beauty. I could not endure it, for it really frightened me. I got up hastily. “Let’s go into the smoker—the laboratory sketch,” I faltered.

“Sure!—good work! Let’s get down to business and cut out the scenery.” His words had a most ominous connotation—like the symbolism which critics allege they find in Ibsen’s plays, I thought. The result was to drive away for a moment my gloom, and I smiled at my own mental comment.

As we went forward toward the smoker, I looked more closely at my new business associate, beginning with his back, which was all that was visible now. He was severely dressed

with a sort of fussy neatness peculiar to the work of American business men's tailors. His shoes shone resplendent, his trousers were creased with painful accuracy, his back was erect and smooth as a duck's. Even his hair had been severely disciplined by his barber, and on it my friend had placed, with due care, a little checked golfing cap that might have been the product of a maker of Swiss watches, so exactly did the little grey and black squares match at the seams. "Engineering efficiency applied to personal attire," I thought to myself. "His clothes remind me of those planned by the mathematicians in Laputa, except that these American mathematicians use formulæ of scientific accuracy."

As we took our seats in two large wicker chairs in the smoker I couldn't resist shaking on to the left sleeve of his coat, as if by accident, a cold ash from my empty pipe. Instantly he produced a handkerchief as fine and dainty as a lady's and violently flicked at his sleeve. I murmured an apology and smiled to myself. Then he carefully drew up his trousers so as not to spoil the crease, replaced his handkerchief, adjusted his invisible eye-glasses, and produced a pencil and paper.

"Now to business!" he said.

"One moment," I interrupted and touched the bell. The coloured porter appeared. I saw my friend frown ever so slightly. My sense of humour was returning fast, as I noted how easy it was going to be to tease this deadly earnest, efficient person. "Will you have a whiskey and soda or a bottle of Bass?" I asked in an innocent, friendly voice.

"Neither, thank you. When I have business to discuss I never touch liquor," he replied, with a most meaning emphasis upon the latter half of his statement, albeit politely enough. I inwardly resented hearing Bass's ale, or whiskey and soda for that matter, described as "liquor."

"Bring a bottle of Bass and a lemonade," I said to the porter, without consulting my companion further. "You must drink something," I added by way of apology. Actually I was under the impression that sweet lemonade would nauseate a grown

man, if taken so soon after dinner. I wanted revenge for that word "liquor."

"Thanks—a lemonade is just a thing," he responded enthusiastically. "It's a very refreshing drink on a warm evening. You are very kind—have one of my cigars?" and he produced a black, oily looking object named after some Spanish infanta and having about the same figure as one of those estimable princesses. Now I felt toward a black cigar on a hot, stuffy train, when business was to be talked, about as he did toward "liquor"—and the similarity made me smile again. After all, our prejudices were the same, but involved different details. The lemonade arrived, he bit his aromatic monster, puffed it luxuriously, waved his glass ceremoniously at me, and took a deep draft of the sweet liquid, copiously mixed with Havana smoke. My glass of Bass, on the way to my lips, paused, and I shuddered. I began to wish, like Hamlet, that I had tried some other plan of revenge for that foul epithet "liquor."

"Now we are all set," he announced cheerily, which was more than I was sure my dinner was, but I said nothing. "Have you thought about the dimensions?" he continued.

"Of what?" I asked, my mind still on the problem of a compound of cigar and lemonade.

"The testing-laboratory, of course!" There was just a trace of irritation in his tone. I made a guilty effort to pull myself together.

"No, I haven't. But I've a list in my trunk of the machinery we need and the floor space it occupies. It's easy enough to figure it out from that."

"In your trunk!" he said in an awful voice. "Then what's the use of talking about it tonight?"

"That's what I wondered," I remarked amiably, "but I thought perhaps you had some ideas on the subject."

I could see from his expression that I had made a bad start. His face was sharp, keen, shrewd, but not at all intellectual. His eyes were bright and beady, and I knew, as I looked at him, that, for all his alert keenness and shrewdness, he knew nothing about anything except the business he had been taught. The

latter he knew with an almost ferocious accuracy. On a specific engineering problem in his own field it would be hard to match him, but on constructive ideas which involved applying what he knew to broader questions—I had my doubts. There was no imagination, no background on which to build. I began to see my father's method in picking such an associate for me. On details this man couldn't go wrong—he would keep my part of the work practical, whereas I knew I was relied upon to see in what new paths this manufacturing company could be made to expand and develop. But first I had to learn the business. Therefore, as the present arrangement stood, I was my companion's subordinate.

"I'm sorry," I said; "I didn't think we could talk business until we had seen the factory, so I put all my data in my trunk."

"Well," he laughed, "I guess we'll gradually have to get you used to hustling. Here's a whole evening we might have used, and you've thrown it away. But I can give you some good advice about your new job, anyway."

"Please do," I remarked, anxious to atone for my error.

"Ted," he went on, "I'm a New Yorker, and I've made pretty good as an engineer. I've had to make my own way, and I don't know much about fancy living, but I know a hell of a lot about making and not making money."

"What do you mean by 'fancy living'?" I asked with genuine interest.

"Well, for one thing, going around in musical comedy clothes and drinking liquor when you ought to be on the job. Do you get me?"

It suddenly dawned on me, not all at once, but little by little, that he meant me! "Musical comedy clothes" rankled most, for I did not at first catch the full force of his suspicions.

"I got these clothes in Bond Street," I protested mildly.

"I don't know where you got them, but they look it," he said.

"Now, my boy, you're going to a town where people don't understand all this fancy foreign stuff. You've got to dress

the part and get down to being a plain American where you started from. You've got to cut out the booze. I don't know about women, but your clothes give the wrong idea there too."

At last the total of his suspicions penetrated, and unfortunately I suddenly shouted with laughter. I rocked back and forth in my chair in uncontrollable delight. When I at last looked up, he was smoking his cigar at a most uncompromising angle, with a hurt look upon his face.

"My dear Knowlton," I gasped at last, "I have no idea what impression I have given you, but really your last insinuation was too much for me. Like most young men of my age I'm probably engaged or soon will be—and as for the rest, you needn't worry."

"What do you mean by 'probably engaged or soon will be'?" He asked, still suspiciously, but obviously somewhat relieved at this announcement.

"I'm twenty-three—one usually finds the thing imminent at that age."

"Hell!" he replied. "This is business, not a joke. Booze and women don't mix with business."

"I've never mixed them much—even for pleasure," I retorted. "I hate headaches, and uneducated people bore me so that, be they as beautiful as Cleopatra, I can make nothing of them. I assure you I shall be perfectly safe in Deep Harbor, or anywhere else that the most ancient profession flourishes."

"I get you," he said, "and I guess it's straight all right, from all I've heard. Takes you a lot of words to say it, just as it takes you too much time to do things. But you'll get over that. Point is, Deep Harbor won't see *you* at all. Not in those clothes."

"They are simple country tweeds," I protested once more, for the thought that I might have to wear his kind horrified me. "My tailor is supposed to know his business."

"They don't fit, and they're loud enough to scare all the trotting horses on State Street. Don't you ever get 'em pressed? If you go sitting around in cafés drinking English ale, you'll make a bad impression. We've got to build up a

new business and we've got to get people's confidence in us to do it. You can't float around town in the Middle West like you was attending a house party and get away with it. People won't think you are serious—when they don't think you are worse."

"I see," I replied. "Business, as I understand it, is so serious a thing out here that its pursuit means banishing from one's life, as a start, all sense of humour and all the little comforts and conveniences. One can have electric light, a porcelain bath, steam heat, and a bank account, but one mustn't have comfortable clothes, easy-going habits, or a genial feeling for the absurdities of solemn living."

"There you go exaggerating everything I say. No wonder you know a lot about chemical experiments—your ideas tumble all over themselves. That's all right when you've got test tubes to pour 'em into, but you got to be careful how you spill 'em around Deep Harbor. What church do you attend?"

The suddenness with which this query came at me left me floundering once more.

"Church?" I queried, as if I had never heard of the institution.

"Hell, yes—church," Knowlton replied. "Nothing like being seen regularly at church when you hit a new town. You make friends that way, and it's good for business—makes people think you steady and dependable."

"Really, I had never before considered the church in the light of a business associate," I answered, "but I can see there is considerable point to what you say. I wonder Polonius didn't think of it."

"One of those classical guys you learn about in college, isn't he?"

"Yes—you would admire immensely his advice to his son. I'll buy you a calendar with it on when we get there. It's a lot like what you've been telling me."

"Well, I guess he was a wise guy, all right, and learned the way I did—from being up against it. That's worth all the book learning there is."

"But you learned your profession from books."

"Sure I did—scientific books. You can't put them in the same class with the stuff they fill you full of at college."

"There's a science of living—and some of that is in books too."

"Well, how about church? You've got the damnedest habit of steering the conversation off the subject I've ever seen. There's only one science of living—get the stuff, then you can live as you damn please."

"Surely you don't expect me to go to church just to help business."

"You mean to say you don't go to church at all?"

"About that. Once in a while to a cathedral—when I want to think or dream, and there happens to be a cathedral handy, or else to some little quiet parish church that I'm certain beforehand has an eleventh century smell."

"I'm a Presbyterian," he announced stoutly, as if I would dispute him, and bit off the end of another impossible cigar. "Everybody ought to be something." He had ignored my cathedral reply.

"True," I said, "but why Presbyterian when one might choose so many other things to be? Aren't they the people who believe something dreadful about babies?"

"My father was a Presbyterian—he was an old Scotch engineer and went to sea for forty years. I've always kept up what he thought, for no one ever got ahead of the old man—not much."

So this man was an idealist down underneath all that hard, surface veneer of remorseless business! It was quite obvious that the old Scotch engineer had not laid up treasures for his posterity, and yet he had left a clear impression that "no one ever got ahead of him"—an ideal of success, recognized as success, not built on the attainment of wealth. I felt a lot better about Knowlton—we were going to get on, I was certain. But I didn't dare tell him all this, for I knew he wouldn't understand. I was even sorry I had been flippant about Presbyterians. After all, it was a silly pose to patronize a man who

had made his way from the bottom to the position of a first class engineer, whereas I had done nothing but read a few books and drift about the world.

"Knowlton," I asked, in all seriousness this time, "will you have another drink?"

"Thanks, I wouldn't mind one more of those lemonades."

Once more the porter came, and I ventured a second bottle of Bass.

"I'll be discreet in Deep Harbor," I apologized, "although I won't promise to give up Bass entirely. It's a link with home—almost a ceremony, you know."

"Oh, that's all right, Ted. I guess I've got you sized up all right. Go ahead and be your own boss. As long as you deliver the goods, that's all I ask. Do it in your own way."

The drinks arrived. "Bring a box of chocolate peppermints," he commanded the porter. "Good heavens—he's going to add that to his lemonade and cigars!" I thought. "What is that man's interior made of?"

"So you have already sized me up?" I asked as he munched a chocolate between alternate sips and puffs.

"Sure! I got you pretty straight down in the office in New York the day we signed the papers. I did think you might jump the track once in a while, though. And when you blew on to the train in that third act make-up, I thought perhaps you'd been out for a final fling at Broadway. But you're all right. Have some chocolate?"

"No, thanks. I am curious, though, to have my fortune told. Will I make good, do you think?"

"Ted, I'm going to be straight with you. I don't know. You may get folks sore at you, the way you always seem to be laughing inside you at the people who don't talk or think the way you do. You don't know it all yet, and you've got no patience with folks who don't belong to your gang. You haven't knocked around enough in real life to learn that there's several ways of getting there besides your way. You've lived abroad and picked up a lot of things I don't know anything about and never will, and you're a little stuck on your cargo."

But I'm not so sure it's worth as much as you think in the open market—not in the manufacturing business in Deep Harbor. Still, a couple of years on the treadmill may work wonders."

"A couple of years!" I gasped.

"Well, you don't expect to take a new concern and make a fortune in twelve months the way they tell you in those story books, do you? Not if you was John D. Rockefeller, which you aren't."

"Two years in Deep Harbor," I murmured almost to myself.

"Oh, Deep Harbor's a pretty decent sort of a town. It's up-to-date. They've got a Chamber of Commerce full of live wires and the place is just beginning to hit its stride. Give the plants there now ten years, and the town will be full of millionaires. Of course, I can see your point—I'm a New Yorker myself, and the Bush League doesn't appeal any too strong to me. But the stuff lies buried out there in that burg, and you and I, Ted, are going there to dig some of it up. There's nothing like growing up with a town."

And with this final epigram, Knowlton got up, stretched, and guessed he would go to bed.

I bade him good-night and lit another pipe. I confess frankly that I found Knowlton's accurate powers of analysis disturbing. I who had flattered myself that I knew all about him with the first words he spoke, now made the humiliating discovery that he already knew more about me than I was ever likely to know about him. Furthermore, his estimate of me, if not too unfavourable, was still not very flattering. When at last I left the smoker for the sleeper, it was in as gloomy a frame of mind as when I first boarded the train.

CHAPTER THREE

I CAMP IN THE DESERT

ABOUT an hour after a turbulent portion of my night's rest, later identified as something being done to the train in the yards at Buffalo, the porter aroused me, and I made such preparations as a Pullman makes possible to face the new day and a new world. We were rapidly drawing near Deep Harbor, and Knowlton's briskness at the imminent approach of business increased even beyond its normal. It was akin to the pawing of the mediaeval charger when he knew it near the time for the oriflamme to be advanced. The diner was not yet ready, so Knowlton sat beside me and pointed out the potential and actual resources of the country as we whizzed along. For me, my first sight of Lake Erie lying blue and serene in a hot early morning July sun was sufficient. I cared little for statistics in the face of that. In spite of the heat the vegetation was still vividly green and fresh, washed from the showers of the day before. At frequent intervals turbulent and muddy little brooks rushed lakewards through red shale gorges full of moss, ferns, and gorgeous old trees. From the railway tracks to the mile-or-so-distant lakeshore interminable vineyards stretched, interspersed with an occasional field of Indian corn. On our left, low-lying hills rolled backward to the horizon. The sunlight was vivid, almost painful, and the whole country seemed to glow and teem with life.

The villages were less encouraging. As a rule they were straggly and unkempt, with tumble-down wooden houses and barns, and showed no pride in neatness, apart from a well-kept school-house or other solitary public building. There were few if any flowers about the cottages, and what few there were were neglected. The gardens were composed of

grass, which the more careful owners were already out sprinkling with garden hose. In fact the garden hose seemed almost the only sign of community pride. Even kitchen gardens were few and badly cultivated.

"What do they do with these millions of grapes?" I asked Knowlton.

"Make grape-juice of them," he answered. "See—there's a grape juice factory over there."

It seemed to me a strange way of repaying Heaven's bounty, as I felt quite certain these same grapes would make excellent claret, but I knew better than to say this to Knowlton.

"I suppose," I said at last, as the vineyards began to get a little on my nerves, "that, like everything else over here, these are the largest vineyards in the world?"

"No," he surprised me by replying, "the California vineyards are much more extensive." Knowlton had a weakness for words like "extensive." When he abandoned slang he used in its place, not always accurately, a language of almost eighteenth century formality.

"There's Deep Harbor," he suddenly exclaimed in much excitement; "you can see the towers of the Polish cathedral."

"Polish cathedral?" I asked in utter amazement, thinking perhaps this was one of Knowlton's jokes.

"Sure. All the unskilled labour in Deep Harbor is Polish—that's their church. Just beyond are the chimneys of the Lake Board Paper Company. These are the yards—get your suit-case."

"Polish!" I thought. "Here is an unexpected complication." There was no time to ask more about the "sledded Polacks," for at that moment the train stopped with a jerk and we got off.

"Right on time—5.30 to the second," said Knowlton, consulting his watch. "We'll just go down State Street to Schaefer's Hotel, leave our grips, and get breakfast. Then to work."

The train was already moving—evidently one had to be quick in order to disembark at Deep Harbor. I glanced

about. The platform of the station was of rotten and irregularly laid planks. The station itself was a grey, forbidding-looking structure with a tower on which was the date 1864. A truck load of trunks charged us profanely, and we were just able to dodge aside. A youth offered to sell me some sandwiches wrapped in tissue paper. I was seized with an irresistible desire to test Knowlton at his own briskness.

"Why not breakfast here on sandwiches and then go straight out to the factory? We can save an hour."

Knowlton snorted. "Not much. Railroad sandwiches! I must have a cup of coffee; besides, we can't get in until quarter of seven."

"Oh," I said, "then these people do get some sleep." Knowlton ignored this. "Is Schaefer's far? My suit-case is heavy —let's take a cab."

Knowlton laughed. "I doubt if you can get a hack at this hour of the morning—and why waste two dollars? We can take the trolley."

With that we dodged across a maze of terrifying tracks, between charging switch engines and lines of freight cars in the throes of some internal convulsion, to emerge safely at last on the opposite side, where a pale yellow trolley car was awaiting us. As I climbed aboard, the conductor spat with amazing, albeit disturbing, accuracy one inch to the right of my ear, but gave no other sign in answer to our mild query if he went by Schaefer's. Concluding that silence gave consent, we sat down. Schaefer's proved surprisingly near—so near that the trolley, which seemed to me to travel at a fearful speed, carried us one street too far before the non-committal conductor could be induced to pull the signal bell. As we left I felt certain that, for some unknown reason, we had earned his disapprobation.

Schaefer's was an old, dirty-looking building, with a large plateglass window giving on to the pavement. Behind the window was a row of large golden oak rocking chairs, and beside each chair a highly polished brass vessel of convenient height. We entered its portal to encounter a strange, musty odour composed in part of sawdust, warm rubber, and genera-

tions of bad cooking. Behind a desk, on which was spread open a large book, a young man with glazed hair and an unpleasant cravat was chewing a wooden toothpick. Without even glancing at us he removed a pen from a raw potato and silently handed it to Knowlton. I wanted to ask why pens were kept sticking in raw potatoes, but decided to wait for a more opportune time. Knowlton signed his name in a fine Spencerian flourish with beautifully shaded lettering, added "New York," and passed the pen to me. Underneath I wrote mine in a somewhat trembling hand, most self-conscious under the eyes of the young man with the toothpick, and placed "London" after my signature. The clerk suddenly revolved the book as if it were on a pivot and studied our handiwork attentively. When, in the course of a moment or two, he reached my signature he took a pen from behind his ear—the other equivalent of a raw potato, I thought—and gratuitously scratched "Canada" after the "London." I took the book, revolved it as I had seen him do it, silently crossed out the "Canada" and wrote in "England." Once more the book was revolved and this alteration examined. Satisfied that the word was no other than the one I had apparently written, he calmly looked me over from head to foot and again waited, silently as before.

"Two breakfasts," said Knowlton.

"Front!" the clerk ejaculated the length of his toothpick. "Show Mr. Knowlton and his friend to the dining room. Check the grips."

"Front" was another pale youth, of tender years, but with an evil leer in his face. He seized our hand luggage.

"This way, gents!"

We followed.

"Does the clerk know you?" I asked Knowlton. The latter shook his head. "But he called you by name," I protested.

"He read my name in the register."

I had not thought of that.

The odour of the dining room was different, but no better

than that of the office. There was evidently a closer contact with the bad cooking and less of the warm rubber. There advanced to meet us across the black and white tile floor a tall and majestic young lady with pyramidal yellow hair and a black satin gown which fitted her most snugly. She billowed up to us, turned upon her high patent leather heels, and undulated over to a long table, her hips swinging like an Oriental water carrier's. Meekly we trailed after her and sat where she indicated. Just above our heads, a large wooden propeller kept a swarm of flies pleasantly agitated. On the table in front of my seat were a coffee stain, a jar of wooden toothpicks, and a large wire fly-trap full of prisoners buzzing over their misfortune. The Hebe-like personage withdrew, to reappear with two very thick glasses filled to overflowing with pale yellow ice water. These she casually spilled at each of our places and added a dirty and grease-stained card containing an itemized list of all the things the mind of man had as yet been able to conceive as edible at breakfast. Seven varieties of tea alone were enumerated, including many that had a novel sound. The lady disappeared and left us to our emotions in tranquillity.

While I was still marvelling at the things the menu offered for breakfast, I was suddenly aware of another damsels' presence. As I looked up, I discovered her leaning pleasantly on her elbow, looking over my shoulder, above which I noted her jaws in rapid motion about a piece of chewing gum. When I finally reached her eyes, the mastication ceased, and she smiled a most open and friendly smile. I did all I could to return it as heartily. She put into its proper place an erring lock of brilliant auburn hair, and in a voice that hurt, it was so sharp and searching, she exclaimed:

“Well, gents—what'll it be? Baked apples, prunes, or oranges?” This was completely to ignore the menu, which ranged all the way from peaches to melon in its printed promises.

“What about cantaloupe?” I asked timidly.

"It's all out," she replied promptly; "nothin' in but baked apples, prunes, and oranges."

"Then why this elaborate list?" I enquired.

"Gee whizz! What do you expect for fifty cents? This ain't the Auditorium Hotel. Prunes is nice today." All this she spoke in one breath.

"Bring me some prunes and milk," said Knowlton. I shuddered. I was determined not to be bullied into ordering something I didn't want.

"I'll take an orange, bacon and eggs, and coffee," I said firmly. Her jaws slowed down almost to a pause, as she looked me steadily in the eye, decided she would not fight it out just then, and departed, apparently much hurt. Knowlton rubbed his hands briskly, a sure sign he was preparing to utter some cheerful remark. I looked at him in a way which was an obvious defiance to any happy *bon-mot* he might conceive, so he thought better of it and returned to a contemplation of the menu. For some time the room was empty and silent, save for the buzzing of the captured flies and the hum of the overhead propeller. Then the auburn-haired maid returned, with a bowl of prunes and a generous pitcher of milk, upon whose bluish-ivory surface there struggled a solitary fly.

"Where is my orange?" I ventured.

"'Scuse me—did you say 'orange'?" she asked as sweetly as that acid voice would permit. "Thought you said 'ham an' eggs an' coffee'"

With a whisk of her skirts she was gone once more, and I realized that the first step in her revenge for my ignoring prunes was accomplished. Knowlton deftly removed the fly from his milk with a teaspoon, flicked the creature carelessly on to the floor, and poured the whole contents remaining over the prunes. Next he seized a handful of crisp biscuits, crushed them in the palms of his hands, and added them to the mixture. The resultant compound seemed to me very nearly equivalent to half a bushel, dry measure. With a large sized spoon he attacked the mess vigorously. It was not wholly a

silent operation. I pressed my lips firmly together and said nothing as the level in his bowl rapidly diminished.

Again the lady with sunset-glow hair came back. With a thump that startled me, she dropped in front of me a platter on which was a thick slice of ham ornamented by two highly glazed fried eggs. Beside it was deposited a plate containing a pale roll, a piece of yellow corn-bread, and a muffin made out of some strange refuse—all these warm and soggy. The cup of coffee followed, in a cup innocent of any handle. The coffee had already been diluted with milk and a spoon stuck in it.

“Sugar?” and she began to ladle heaping spoonfuls of granulated sugar rapidly from a glass dish. There was no trace of any orange.

“Stop!” I commanded so suddenly she spilt a spoonful of sugar over the table cloth. “Where is my orange?”

“Gee, did you want the orange first?” Her surprise sounded quite genuine. “I thought you ordered it last.”

“Never mind the orange now”—after all, I did know when I was thoroughly beaten—but I want black coffee, and I did say ‘bacon,’ not ‘ham.’ Also some toast. You may leave the ham, now it’s here.”

“Gee, you’re an awfully fussy eater,” was her comment. “You didn’t order black coffee, did you?”

“No,” I had to admit.

“Well, I’m only a waitress, not a mind reader,” and with this unanswerable retort she scooped up my cup of coffee with a skilfully perilous gesture, and resumed her quest. Knowlton looked across at me and grinned.

“Having trouble with your breakfast? You can’t expect breakfast at Schaefer’s to be like dear old London,” he went on, while something approaching a serious outburst was struggling in me. “When in Rome, do as the Romans do—that’s the best plan.”

“That’s all very well,” I said with extreme self-control, “but I am not going to eat prunes if the whole Holy Roman Empire ate them. I don’t see why she can’t bring me the breakfast I

want when everything on God's earth is on that bill of fare."

"You'll shake down all right," he said in what was meant to be a soothing way. "Kicking about the grub won't do you any good. They don't know any better in a place like this. What's the use of getting in wrong with the waitress?"

It was hopeless to explain, so I snorted instead. Knowlton took a slice of bread and polished the inside of his now empty bowl until it glistened.

"Looks as though Fido had finished that off," he remarked, as he rolled and lit a cigarette; "I'll knock some ashes into it so they'll have to wash it."

The waitress appeared with a cup of coffee, a plate piled high with thick slices of toast on which chunks of butter were still melting, another plate with two oranges, and a third containing two rashers of coarse bacon. With the grieved air of a person determined to do her duty in the face of all rebuffs she silently grouped this food about me.

"What will you have, Mr. Knowlton?" There was just a faint emphasis upon the "you."

"Thanks, you can bring me a steak, some German fried potatoes, a couple of soft-boiled eggs, and some griddle cakes."

"Do you want black coffee too?" she asked with meaning.

"No, make mine half milk, and bring along another plate of rolls."

"Sure!" remarked the waitress cheerfully and vanished.

"And how did she know your name?" I asked, realizing it was quite useless to question Knowlton about his theory of a hot weather diet.

"Oh, she asked the clerk, I guess. It's good business to always call customers by name. Makes 'em feel at home."

I looked around the room again and inwardly decided that something more than that simple and naïve process would be needed in my case.

"They mean well," Knowlton went on, with his disconcerting habit of reading my thoughts, "but they don't always know how. Now, you're used to thinking of a girl like that as a

servant. She isn't. She thinks she's as good as you are, and I guess there's something in that too. You treat her all right and she'll treat you the same. But don't pull any of that European stuff here. They don't know what it means."

Knowlton's breakfast arrived, and he fell upon it with gusto. "You gents come from Pittsburgh?" the waitress enquired, evidently much mollified by Knowlton's treatment of his breakfast.

"Nope—New York," Knowlton answered.

"Gee, I'd like to go East," she said fervently. "It must be just grand. What line you gents travelling in?"

"We aren't travelling men," Knowlton replied. "I'm an engineer, and my friend here is just a plain business man."

"Oh," she said, somewhat disappointed, I thought. It was clear that she did not rank us as highly as she did travelling men. "Just passin' through the city, I suppose," she continued.

"It's hard to say," said Knowlton. "Maybe we'll be here sometime."

"Going to board here?"—her interest in us somewhat renewed, at this announcement.

"We haven't settled on our eating joint yet. Thought we'd look round first."

"This is as O. K. as any," she said. "The grub's nothing wonderful, but it's as good as you'll get. Lou Meyer's Rathskeller hasn't anything on us, and he charges a dollar a week more. Course, if your friend's particular, he might try the Otooska House down on the park. They put on a lot of airs and charge New York prices there, but it's the same old grub."

"Well," said Knowlton, "we'll see. We'll try 'em all out before we decide."

At this moment another customer entered, to be conducted by the head-waitress with like ceremony, as in our case, to his seat, and our blaze of glory departed to ascertain his wants. As Knowlton rose, seized a toothpick, and started for the door, followed by me, I heard our waitress beginning her searching personal questions all over again.

We paid for our breakfasts—fifty cents apiece—at the desk,

where the clerk took the same lack of interest in the transaction as before. Knowlton asked him the way to the Deep Harbor Manufacturing Company, our destination.

“West Twelfth Street car to the end of the line,” was the brief reply, and with that we set forth.

Although it was still very early in the morning, or seemed so to me, unaccustomed to begin a day’s work at six thirty, it was rapidly growing hot with a peculiar dry, intense heat that made the sunlight painful. West Twelfth Street proved to be in the direction of the railway station, and, although it was only two blocks from Schaefer’s, I was thoroughly moist with perspiration when we joined a throng of blue-overalled mechanics, waiting with shining tin dinner pails on the corner for the arrival of the car. There was no car in sight when we got there, and as we waited I listened to the peculiarly blasphemous conversation of the men about me. Their talk was intelligent, far more so than that of a corresponding class of English working-men, but it was interlarded with an original and soul-curdling profanity. Rates of pay, politics, baseball, their foremen, and women seemed to be the staples of conversation. Young men predominated. Their faces were sharp and eager, and they seemed tense and alive, although affecting and even boasting of their dislike for their “jobs” and their dissatisfaction with the management of their factories. But it was obvious at a glance that they were well fed and clothed, and were excellent workmen. They played incessant practical jokes on each other, rolled innumerable cigarettes, and cheered the electric car when it at last arrived. Long before it stopped they charged the car *en masse*, with rough good nature, greeting conductor and motorman by name, and filled every inch of it before Knowlton and I could fight our way to a bare foothold upon the rear platform.

The car whizzed out a most dreary street—drearier even than the streets across the river in Bermondsey or over beyond the Elephant and Castle. It was six inches deep in a choking grey dust which the fast moving car stirred up into a remorseless searching cloud. Overhead in the hot blue sky hung masses

of coal smoke, now beginning to pour from factory chimneys. Parallel to the car line ran a railway track, quite unguarded from the street proper, along which switch engines with freight cars smoked and clanged. On either side we passed an endless row of factory buildings, some of brick, but more of wood—even those which were several stories high. In spite of the streaming, intense sunlight and the final blue of the sky, the scene was one of desolation.

The car stopped with a jerk—we had reached the end, it seemed—and with great promptness we pushed one another off the rear platform. This crowd of workmen simply treated Knowlton and me as non-existent, and, if we happened to be in front of them, attempted the physical paradox of walking right through us. As I reached the pavement, I saw before me a long narrow two-storied brick building, surrounded by various lesser sheds and outhouses, the whole surmounted by a huge sign which read "Deep Harbor Manufacturing Company." This was the magic purse of Fortunatus which I had come so far to seek. It looked prosaic enough, but not so dismal as my ride out Twelfth Street had caused me to fear. It was the last of Twelfth Street, apparently, and the last of the factories at that end of town, for beyond I caught a glimpse of green cornfields, grey wooden fences, and, still further on, a blue sliver of the lake. "At least, there's air from the west," I thought, as I followed Knowlton, my heart thumping curiously now I was almost face to face with my ordeal.

We entered a door marked "Office—No Admittance Except on Business," and climbed a steep flight of stairs to pass into a railed-off outer room full of desks and typewriters. There was only one young man, slightly bald, with his coat off, adjusting black alpaca half-sleeves over his cuffs as we entered. From one lip hung the inevitable toothpick which seemed to be the totem pole of these regional tribes. He looked up at us and advanced to meet us, holding out one hand.

"Mr. Knowlton? I'm sure glad to meet you. Walk in. My name's Kane, Phil Kane, and I'm general sales manager for the D. H. M. Co."

He shook Knowlton's hand warmly.

"My friend and associate, Mr. Ted Jevons, of London, England," said Knowlton.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Jevons," said Kane, looking at me with the same curiosity I studied him with. "They tell me London is some town," he added with a forced laugh and an attempt at hearty conversation. "I expect we seem a little out of it here by the lake, after them big cities, but Deep Harbor's pretty up-to-date at that. We have more miles of paved streets in proportion to our population than any city between Buffalo and Toledo. Have you seen the view from the Soldiers' Home, Mr. Jevons?"

I informed him that we had only just arrived and had come directly to the factory, after a breakfast of sorts at Schaefer's.

"You'd ought to have taken Mr. Jevons to the Otooska House," said Kane, laughing. "They have music with meals there, just like a New York hotel. 'Course, it's only an electric organ, but it makes you feel cheerful. Come right in, won't you? Mr. Norwood won't be out to turn the factory over to you gentlemen until about eight, but if there's anything I can do to show you around first, just say the word."

As I passed through the little swinging gate that divided the inner from the outer office, Kane seized my hat with a murmured apology and hung it on a hook.

"This is the general manager's office, in there," he said, pointing through the door in a wooden partition into a cubby hole containing one roll-top desk, two chairs, and a large filing cabinet. "I suppose you'll use this, Mr. Knowlton. Question is, where'll we put Mr. Jevons' desk?"

"Oh," I replied, "mine will be in the testing laboratory."

"Laboratory?" he repeated. "I saw something about that in the correspondence over the sale of the plant, and I couldn't figure out what you were going to build a laboratory for."

"To test and improve our product—also to systematize its factory costs," I said.

"Well, maybe so," he remarked doubtfully, "but a laboratory seems to me like an awful addition to overhead expenses."

However, I don't presume to know how to run your business, Mr. Jevons. I suppose you won't make any radical changes in the selling department, will you?" There was a note of genuine anxiety in his voice.

"Not for the present," Knowlton interjected crisply. "We shall continue the policy and staff of the old company until we get our bearings. Then there will be plenty of opportunity for good men to move up. Meanwhile, we'll size up the efficiency of everybody and see what we've got."

Kane scratched the back of one ear with a pencil and turned this statement over in his mind. I noticed that his eyes were pale and weak, and that his manner was plainly that of a man who had little faith in fortune's star. An efficiency test was clearly one he was not confident of facing, but neither was I, and my sympathy went out to him. I had never seen a man at close range before who actually feared for his bread and butter, and that was what Kane's face showed, as he tried to conciliate the two of us as representatives of the new owners. It was not a pleasant sight. I could tell by Knowlton's sharp glance at him that our engineer was remorselessly applying that uncanny faculty of his of reading men's thoughts, and I guessed Kane had sealed his own doom.

But Knowlton said never a word. Instead he pulled some papers from his pocket, checked his memoranda for the day, and read a few documents which Kane turned over to him. I took out my pipe and started to light it.

"No smoking in the factory!" exclaimed Knowlton sharply.

"Do you mean to say," I protested, "that I've got to be here from seven to six each day without even smoking?"

"Just that," replied Knowlton with a grin. "We lose our insurance if we allow smoking."

At that moment a steam whistle began an infernal din, apparently over my head—a din which was echoed from every point of the compass. Instantly an even worse clatter and roar of machinery began under our feet, and the flimsy wooden floor and partitions vibrated visibly.

"Seven o'clock!" said Knowlton, rising. "The day's work

has begun. Come, Ted, we'll take a walk through the machine-shop and look things over. Never mind, Kane—we'll find our own way around. Don't lose time from your job on our account."

With this hint Kane went suddenly back to his desk, while Knowlton and I descended the stairs and entered the machine shop. As we passed through the narrow aisles between closely packed lathes and planers, Knowlton made a series of rapid notes on the back of an envelope. Nothing escaped his eye, from a machine working too slowly to a foreman with too many men to look after. At the time I had no way of judging whether his inspection revealed a satisfactory condition or the reverse. The factory had been bought, of course, after a preliminary inventory of contents and orders on hand, but Knowlton's task was to judge of its efficiency as an operating plant. For over an hour we went from one department to another, until Knowlton's notes had covered all the scraps of paper either of us had in our pockets.

"I guess we'll go upstairs now and talk to Norwood," said Knowlton. "By the way, what did you think of the plant, Ted?" I felt as my old friend Dr. Watson must have felt when Sherlock Holmes asked him one of those sudden posers whose explanation was really so simple.

"It seems very busy," I said with conscious feebleness.

"Yes," he remarked drily, "that busyness is also costing them a lot of money. I think we'll shake this old place up, Ted, before we're through."

As I followed him I covertly looked at my watch. A little after eight! Good heavens, how many hours to six o'clock! It seemed as if I had been up since day before yesterday.

The upper office was now full of clerks and clicking typewriters, presided over by some remarkably pretty girls. At least three of them looked me straight in the eye as I went past, and I made a mental note that they were a great improvement upon the waitresses at Schaefer's. But my thoughts were interrupted by Norwood's coming forward to greet us.

Norwood was one of the young millionaires of Deep Har-

bor—the son of a father who had helped to create the town and whose capital was the backbone of every enterprise of importance in the city. Young Norwood had recently inherited the overlordship of Deep Harbor, and one of his first acts had been to sell the Deep Harbor Manufacturing Company to the interests represented by my father.

Norwood himself was rather a disappointment. He was a tall, weak-faced, pale young man, whose clothes, neat and costly, were wrong in every particular. His seal ring was too large, his watch chain too heavy, his collar too high, and his cravat too loud. Even his shoes were ornamented with fancy leatherwork in scroll patterns. His manner was cordial to the point of oiliness, yet cold and insincere. In short, I took an instant dislike to him.

Obsequiously he placed chairs for us, closed the door, and produced fat black cigars, thus ignoring the office rule about smoking; and while he was ostensibly listening to Knowlton I had the uncomfortable feeling that he was studying me. As Knowlton ran over the items of his memoranda I kept catching Norwood looking me over out of the corners of his watery blue eyes. It was increasingly clearer that Knowlton's questions and enthusiastic exposition of plans were boring Norwood, for, after fidgeting more and more, he suddenly got up.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, "the business is yours now. I'm sorry I've an engagement downtown. If there's anything I can do, or any advice I can give you, just 'phone me and I'll look in, anytime. Glad to have met you," and with a vigorous, cold handshake he left. Knowlton and I faced each other. We were now in command of the ship. Knowlton carefully extinguished his cigar.

"Ted," he said, "I don't trust this Norwood. He's sold this thing, and it looks all right, but I'm afraid there is a Sengambian concealed somewhere in the woodpile. You noticed how he dodged talking over the business?"

I nodded. Even I had noted that.

"Besides," I added, "he did not offer to put us up at his clubs or in any way behave like a gentleman."

Knowlton grinned his favourite grin.

"Ted, I hadn't thought of that as an index of Norwood's business ability, but damned if I don't think your reason as good as mine."

With that he pressed a button on his desk and a spotlessly clean young woman responded.

"Bring me the file of our customers," he said, and she withdrew.

"What shall I do?" I asked.

"You—oh, yes—you go out to the drafting room and design the testing laboratory. Come to me if you get stuck on any details. As for me," he added, "I'm going to start looking for that Senegambian this very minute."

My arrival in the drafting room caused a mild sensation among its occupants, but a drawing table, desk, instruments, and materials were speedily placed at my disposal, and as there was a rule against talking in this room, I was left in silence, but under close observation, to work out my problem. Furtively I produced from my pocket a useful manual containing practical tables and formulae for nearly everything under the sun, and with the help of this and my actual knowledge of what a chemical laboratory ought to contain, I had made considerable progress with my rough pencilled plan when the twelve-o'clock whistle blew. I had become so absorbed in my work that I had forgotten all about the noon hour.

I found Knowlton in the office where I had left him. He was surrounded by piles of papers and correspondence which he was reading, checking, and making notes about on separate slips of paper.

"Not found him yet, but I think I'm on his trail, Ted. Let's go to lunch."

There was no lunchroom in the neighborhood, so there was nothing for it but to go back to Schaefer's in the broiling heat of the packed trolley car, and again face the flies and perils of that dining room. As Knowlton insisted upon our being back at the factory before the one-o'clock whistle, there was no time to change one's clothes or to see about a place to sleep that

night. Never had I felt so dirty as I did after a morning in the heat and soft coal smoke of Deep Harbor. Luncheon at Schaefer's proved to be "dinner," a noisy, crowded, hurried affair in which the waitress made no pretence of serving one's order, but brought what she considered a standard type of meal. There was no time to protest or change things. Knowlton, as usual, ate prodigiously, with the most annoying conceivable relish, of everything put before him, and gulped down in addition two large tumblers of watery milk.

We were back at ten minutes to one, and promptly, as the whistle blew, I stood once more before my drawing table and resumed the task. About three o'clock it seemed as if I could not stand another moment. My knees shook with fatigue and the unaccustomed strain of standing hour after hour, but there were no seats in the drafting room, and every one had to do his work standing up. At four I thought I should have to go to Knowlton's office and beg for mercy, but I didn't, because I knew he would think me unable to stick even a simple job through. At five the office staff left, including the drafting room, but there was still an hour for me. And this was to go on five and a half days a week, month after month, I thought! How did factory workers endure it without going mad?

When the six o'clock whistle blew, I could almost have cried with relief. I nearly staggered as I came into Knowlton's office, and sank into a chair mopping my face.

Knowlton grinned.

"Young gentleman from London, England, finds ten hours in an American factory on a nice warm July day something of a physical effort—shall I have that put in tomorrow's Social Notes?" he asked.

"You can't insult me, Knowlton," I said. "I am damned tired, and I have sense enough to admit it. So are you, I suspect, only you've been sitting down."

"Well," he conceded, "this elusive Senegambian I am after does make me tired—especially as friend Norwood is too sly a customer to be caught with the goods on him. If the Senegambian is there—and I've already found his footprints—we

can trust Norwood to have made himself safe first. Let's go eat."

"Not at Schaefer's—God, not there!" I wailed. "I've had all I can stand of that hole."

"All right. We'll try the Rathskeller, but don't forget we haven't, as yet, any place to sleep."

I was too tired to eat when we reached the little musty hot German restaurant down under the sidewalk off State Street, but the waiter did produce a large foaming mug of German beer in which I blunted some of the acuteness of my physical aches and pains.

CHAPTER FOUR

I HAVE MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH PROSPERO

ONE evening, after we had been a few weeks in Deep Harbor, Knowlton arrived at my rooms as soon as he had had supper.

“Teddy, I’ve got a new job for you and one that’ll keep you—well, it’ll keep you pretty busy.” There was one comforting thing about Knowlton, he never beat about the bush.

“What is it?” I asked anxiously.

“I’ve just hired a chemical assistant for you.”

“Is that all?”

“No, it’s much more complicated than that. This fellow is an old inventor—a kind of genius. At any rate, I’ve got faith in him. He dreams dreams and sees visions, like the fellow in the Bible—Job, wasn’t it? I guess you know what I mean. But he has two serious drawbacks. He isn’t practical—not the least idea of the value of money. It’s up to you to see he does economically what he’s told. The other drawback is that he drinks and is thoroughly unreliable. You’ve got to keep him straight and keep him away from the booze. His favourite occupation, aside from chemistry, is alternating Bass’s ale with brandy and Benedictine. Then he gets ugly and his experiments suffer. When he’s sober, he’s a wonder.”

I still was totally at sea as to what was expected of me.

“He looks like a pirate from the Barbary coast—San Francisco,” Knowlton went on, “and when he’s full he acts like one. I’ve rented the bedroom that opens into this study for him. You can share the sitting room and work here evenings on your chemical problems. Also you will be able to keep an eye on him. The first time he comes home pickled, you let me know.”

This cool way of supplying me with a roommate staggered me.

"Do you wish me to cable your father to authorize this arrangement?" said Knowlton, with his unerring skill in tracing the course of my thoughts.

"Not if you honestly tell me it is for the good of the business, and not because you want to tie me down."

"Well," he puffed, looking at his cigarette, "I'm frank enough to say it's a mixture of both. We need this man in our business and some one has got to look after him. It's two birds with one barrel."

"It's very inconvenient for me," I objected. "I like to read and experiment with my literary work in the evenings."

"The world is often an inconvenient place," moralized Knowlton. "It might be inconvenient for several of us if old Prospero gets to hitting the booze."

"Prospero?" I enquired, surprised by Knowlton's sudden excursion into literature.

"That's the best name I know for him. I learned a piece about him in school once, something about cloud-capped palaces leaving a wreck behind them, or words to that effect. I have a hunch that if you steer old Prospero right, he'll bring one of those cloud-capped palaces down to earth. The only thing that worries me is the danger of the wreck behind. Shakespeare certainly knew human nature all right. He was a wise boy."

Knowlton achieved his carefully planned purpose of disarming me. I laughed and even began to feel most curious concerning Prospero.

"What is the real name of your genius?" I asked, still postponing my final decision.

"John de Fougère is what he calls himself, since he decided he had French blood. As a matter of fact he took this name to avoid an unnecessary wife in Cripple Creek. That's a piece of information I've salted away for what it may be worth to us. Just now he is living with an ex-circus gymnast. I'm buying the lady off, and persuaded John to pay his alimony to her. He

thinks I think this circus woman is his wife. Prospero's right name is Donald McClintock and he hails originally from South Carolina. There's still some Scotch that isn't whiskey in him somewhere."

"I think you have planned a rather heavy contract for me. Won't he get restless without his gymnastic companion?"

"No. You see Prospero is all brains and no physical strength. Lately the lady has taken to practicing her gymnastic skill on him and beats him up every time he stays out nights. He says she is too crassly material to appreciate his knowledge of chemistry. If we can keep him in shape and use his brains for three months, I'll be satisfied."

"All right" I agreed finally. "You may move him in here and I'll stand it as long as I can. When does he arrive?"

"Day after tomorrow."

With this Knowlton rose and took himself off, leaving me to meditate upon this new complication in life.

Wednesday evening brought Prospero. Knowlton escorted him to my apartment, and the door between my study and the extra bedroom was formally opened. Prospero revealed the reason for his name. He was a tall, gaunt, swarthy individual over whose sharp bones a sallow, shrunken skin clung tightly. His eyes, deep sunken and brown, glowed beneath bushy eyebrows. His long, lean face was adorned with a waxed moustache and sharp pointed goatee, which, together with an ample brimmed felt hat, gave him the appearance of a royalist of the ancient régime. He wore a Byronic collar, above which protruded an enormous Adam's apple resting in the folds of a flowing black tie. His hands, tapering like a vulture's claws, were covered with cheap imitation jewelry. A suit of outrageous checked tweeds and patent leather pumps gave the last touch to his bizarre appearance. Any one seeing him would seize upon him as a character newly stepped from some detective story or tale of mystery. His breath was strongly impregnated with alcohol, which the smoke of a Cuban cigarette hanging loosely from a flabby lower lip could not conceal. He seemed even more out of place in Deep Harbor than I did.

Some mediaeval alchemist's cell, hung with crocodiles and stuffed owls, was the only natural background for him.

With him he brought infinite luggage—everything from a steamer roll to a canvas dunnage bag, all of it portable. As we shook hands, an act which he performed in a most friendly manner, he crossed the room, opened one of his mysterious overflowing bags, and produced a box of costly chocolates. These he solemnly passed—like the Dodo in "Alice in Wonderland," I thought. Like Alice I took one, fearing to offend him. Then he drew his chair up to a table and announced that he was ready to talk business.

Knowlton evidently understood what was expected, for he took out a roll of bills and counted out a respectable pile. "I think you will find the amount correct—two months' pay in advance as per our agreement," said Knowlton. Prospero made great ceremony of counting and recounting the bills in silence, moistening his fingers frequently and getting the smoke from his cigarette in his eyes at intervals during the process.

"And now, Teddy, my lad," he said suddenly to me, to my intense surprise, calling me by my nickname in this unexpected way, "we'll go out, get something to eat, and see the town."

I looked at Knowlton, and his expression denoted approval. I fetched my hat and the two of us sallied forth. Don Quixote and Sancho were not a more ill-assorted couple, and it was not strange that men turned to stare at us in the street.

"You are French, I believe," I said at last in a desperate effort to start conversation. I didn't believe it, but I wanted to know what he would say. His answer was astounding.

"I am a descendant of Charles Martel," he announced as if he were stating the most ordinary fact. I let the statement pass in silence.

"Are you leading me to the best restaurant in town?" he queried a block further on.

"If you wish," I replied. "The best restaurant in town is a relative question. We'll try the so-called grill room at the Otooska House."

Our entrance together was easily the event of the evening.

Prospero demanded a table like an emperor issuing a proclamation. Waiters came upon the run from every nook and cranny and crowded tables upon us. He was content to sit at the most conspicuous. To one waiter he handed his hat, to another his stick, to a third, his gloves, and bade a fourth "Divest my friend of his paraphernalia." There was a distinct touch of Wilkins Micawber in his make-up, I decided; still, one must expect that of a present-day relative of Charles Martel.

"Stout and oysters for two," he commanded. "I have ventured to order stout and oysters in compliment to you," he explained. "The combination is new to me, but I have read about it in Charles Dickens' novels."

"We are rather inland for oysters," I said. "They have an indecent habit here of serving them nude on a plate—without their shell, I mean," I added, as Prospero frowned questioningly.

"You are a chemist, Edward? Am I right?" Prospero's questions sounded like those of Rhadamanthus.

"I'm trying to be one," I modestly rejoined.

"I am the greatest chemist in the world, if I choose to let men know it." It seemed to me rather ill concealed for a secret of such importance. "I have an idea here—" he tapped his forehead—"that will make me rich beyond the dreams of avarice. Would you like to know what it is?"

"Very much," I said sipping my stout gratefully.

"Listen!" he proclaimed. "I have discovered the secret of making electricity direct from coal! What do you think of me now?" And he sat back to study the effect of his dramatic announcement on me. I felt that common politeness compelled me in some way to rise to the occasion.

"It sounds marvellous," I said. "Have you ever done it?"

He waved this question aside with a long draft of stout. "Not yet," he sputtered through the brown foam on his moustache, "but that is immaterial, for I know the secret." I contemplated him a bit ruefully, wondering if the hardheaded Knowlton had made a good bargain in saddling us with this.

"You doubt me," he remarked. "That is because you do not

know me yet. Do you know"—suddenly dropping his voice to a whisper—"I am not convinced yet that the alchemist's search for the philosopher's stone was vain. It might be possible—locked within the element radium that secret lies. And if men are to find it out, I shall be that man."

"Oh, hell, Mr. Fougère!" I said much nettled, "all this has very little to do with the chemistry we use in our business."

"True, my young materialist, true. He who looks straight before his nose shall see but the dust. My gaze is among the stars. But you need not worry. I shall give you and your father every cent's value that the most exacting business man could ask of me. If you care nothing for my true brains and want only my routine daily labour, that will be *your* loss—yet I shall not hold it against you. Money is the curse of the age."

"Your big ideas sound reasonably profitable," I retorted, "if you pull them off. How would you escape the curse?"

"I can use money wisely, for I am a great man. If I were rich I should cruise in the South Seas."

"That has been done before," I murmured.

"I shall go to Tahiti and surround myself with beautiful island women. There I will build the world's greatest laboratory and search for the philosopher's stone as I recline against the bronze breasts of flower-decked girls."

I meditated a moment on the vision he had conjured up and concluded he would look rather well in the part as outlined. Finally I ventured. "Isn't Tahiti quite an out of the way place for a chemical laboratory? 'Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.'"

"I do not agree with you. The hero of 'Locksley Hall' was wrong. He but reflected sentimentally the materialism of the nineteenth century."

I was amused to have my quotation recognized by him. What was this strange man, and what had he done with himself in the world? I wondered what kind of chemist he would prove.

"In spite of your youth, Edward, I see you are, like me, a

thinker and philosopher; on a lower plane, of course, yet our minds have much in common."

He talked after a fashion of the characters in an early Victorian novel or a transpontine melodrama. Where could such a creature have obtained the skill to keep consistently his elaborate pose? I wished to draw him out, so I played back to him: "I find the world a mildly amusing place and always interesting even in its unpleasant phases."

"That is very true, Edward. At one time I was forced by unusual circumstances to apply my chemical skill to the making of what is known as moonshine whiskey. This was in the mountains of North Carolina. Here, if you please, was one of life's unpleasant phases—that I, of all men, should be technically classified by a capitalistic government as a criminal and hence be subjected to annoyances from internal revenue minions. Nevertheless, I was profoundly interested in the problems involved in eluding man-made laws."

He bared his right forearm; across the drum-like skin ran a long seared scar. "That was as near as the law came to me," he said, and emptied a pony of brandy, which he had ordered as soon as his bottle of stout was empty. I made an effort to stop him by referring to the early hour at which work began at the factory. There was as yet no trace of thickness in his speech; only his fiery eyes were shining more and more brightly. With his next brandy he commanded Welsh rabbits and chocolate ice-cream. Fortunately he made no attempt to urge me to keep pace with him in drinking. As for the morrow, he dismissed it with a shrug.

"I work neither in time nor in space, Edward. My ideas are flashes—gleams—from the outer Cosmos, whence time is not. When they come, I work; when they don't, I await the signal."

"It sounds like an irregular schedule to follow," I smiled.

"When the hour strikes, I shall be there, Edward. Waiter! Bring me another brandy."

From this time on he began to get thoroughly drunk. I could only sit and watch hoping that ultimately he would find his way home. When closing time came he wished to fight the

entire hotel management for suggesting that he leave. At last I coaxed him to go; and, strange to say, I was not once included in his outbursts of rage. Like a lamb he followed me half way home; and then another whim seized him. He was determined to make an excursion down an unsavoury by-street whose nature he recognized. In vain I sought to detain him. I reminded him that half the night was gone and that there was work to do tomorrow. He would listen to no word of mine, but, wrenching his arm free from me, lurched away. Whether to follow or not I was undecided. He turned into an alley and disappeared. The streets were dark and deserted. With a final imprecation almost as picturesque as one of Prospero's own, I went home and to bed.

At six, with the alarm clock still clanging in my ears, I looked into his bedroom. Prospero lay across the bed with most of his clothes on, unconscious. The sleeve of his left arm was rolled up, and I saw that the skin was covered with small puncture marks. On the floor a hypodermic syringe and his Russia leather wallet, both empty, were lying. I shook him savagely, but a groan was the only response. Damning Knowlton for thrusting such a room-mate upon me, I went out to the factory.

Instead of going to work I sat in Knowlton's office waiting for him to arrive. I had made up my mind to have the case of Prospero out with him. Promptly at eight he came, bringing Prospero with him! The latter was as fresh appearing and as amiable as if nothing had happened. He had changed his tweeds for a long frock coat, slightly green with age, and upon his head was a silk hat of a famous vintage.

"Why, Ted, I'm surprised not to find you on the job this morning," grinned Knowlton. "I'm afraid Mr. de Fougère kept you up too late last night. Take him out to the laboratory, and if there's anything needed, wire New York to ship by express. I'll leave you two authority for any reasonable order."

In silence and deep disgust I led the way. As we entered the laboratory Prospero glanced about with an appraising eye.

"Very good, Teddy, very good. A well equipped little workshop," and he removed hat and coat, soaked a towel in fresh water, wrung it out, bound it about his head without further comment, lit a cigarette in defiance of the factory rules staring him in the face, and sat before the long bench table. I outlined the day's work and explained the experiments already under way. He critically picked up a beaker or two, sniffed their contents, and squinted at a rack of test tubes. I waited to see what would happen next. Our problem was one requiring a number of experiments to be performed in sequence. Among the assets of our firm were certain new chemical patents which were not yet in a commercial stage.

De Fougère finished his cigarette and then asked to see the laboratory diary and the inventory of chemicals on hand. These I placed in his hands. He smoked another cigarette in silence while he looked over my records.

"You appear to be a methodical boy, Teddy," he remarked with a yawn, at the same time choosing a Meissen ware dish as an ash tray. "I can't be bothered to write results down. I carry them stored here," and he tapped his forehead.

"All very well," I replied, "but what would happen if you dropped dead?"

Prospero smiled: "That is impossible. I have been sent to this planet to do a great work. Not until all the world rings with the name de Fougère shall I pass away. When that time comes I may pass, like Arthur, into the deep. I have seen my death in dreams, and it is a glorious one. There is no fear of my falling in the street."

All this explanation was not so comforting to me as it was to him, and I decided to add his records to mine, as far as it was possible to get them from observation and question. Was he a megalomaniac, or was his ego an effect of drugs upon a nerve-wracked constitution? Was there any knowledge accompanying this colossal conceit—this ego-centrism of his?

"I grant you, Teddy, that last evening has given you some cause to mistrust me. As soon as this headache clears from my brain, you shall see and marvel at the true de Fougère. You

imagine I am often as you saw me last night? You are wrong, young man, wrong. That is the body of de Fougère struggling for freedom from the mind of de Fougère. I make my body so completely my slave that at times it revolts and demands such food as drugs and flesh."

I was fascinated by this pompous speech, which seemed as if it had been written out beforehand and memorized. A hundred questions were on the tip of my tongue. Where had he acquired this language, this farrago of phrases from Godey's Ladies' Magazine? This thought kept recurring to me as the most inexplicable of all the strange things about this man. I turned to my morning's work and abandoned the problem of Prospero.

In the evening I went to Knowlton's room at the Otooska House and laid formal complaint against de Fougère. Knowlton grinned: "It's great experience for you, Teddy boy. You don't meet many jewels like Prospero at your pink teas, I guess. So he hit the booze and worse, in spite of your protests? Tut, tut, Teddy that's bad."

"Not only that, but I tell you he uses morphine," I said, netted by the way Knowlton took my story.

"Our contract is only for three months, Teddy, and he has forgotten more chemistry than most people will ever know. Now, Ted, keep your hair on. I'm simply gambling on a long chance. If we keep him fairly straight for three months, he can be mightily useful. If we don't, we are only out three months' salary for him. He spent two months' of it last night, which pretty well guarantees us against further blow-ups. I wanted to pay him the whole three in advance, but the old devil was too foxy to take it," Knowlton added reflectively.

Light began to dawn upon me. "So you encouraged him to take that tear last night?"

"Surest thing you know. I thought it would be well to get it out of his system at the start. It has been some time since he has seen that much money. He didn't get you stewed, did he, Ted?"

"No," I said shortly. Knowlton grinned.

"You sound like a hang over, but perhaps it's only your moral sense, Teddy."

"The point is, have I got to have a drug fiend as a room-mate?"

"I'm afraid so, Teddy. We must keep as much of an eye on him as possible. He believes you innocent and guileless; and he'll talk more freely to you than to me."

"Talk freely! Great heavens! I should think he did! That's one of the things I complain of. Perhaps you think it amusing to listen to a crazy man talk about himself night and day."

Upon my return to my quarters I found Prospero, in velvet jacket, cap, and slippers, smoking a peculiar pipe of a great size. It was his instinct to wear a suitable costume for everything he did, even for pipe smoking. An old cash ledger lay open before him, and in this he was writing with—trust Prospero for a dramatic effect—a quill pen! He frowned at me as I entered and growled "Silence!" Somewhat bored and more irritated, I lit a candle which I had bought for sealing documents, set it down on the table by his book, and put out the desk light. "I'll make his damned scene complete," I thought.

"I thank you, Edward," he boomed at me. "Candle-light is less fatiguing to the eye. You are very thoughtful." He scratched abominably with his quill, which I suspected he did not know how to use. I endeavoured to read and watch his melodrama at the same time.

"Edward, do you know what I am writing?"

I rejoiced inwardly at this, for I was certain that my literal interpretation of his injunction to silence would prove irksome to him in the end.

"A treatise on chemistry?" I suggested. "Or perhaps a monograph on one of the rare elements?"

"Wrong, Edward, wrong again. I am writing *the philosophy*."

"*The philosophy?*" I queried.

"I call it *the* philosophy, for it is the only true one. I am the only man who can explain mind and matter—of what the universe is made—why it is, and what the nature of the Supreme Being is."

"What is the universe?" I ventured, hoping to draw him out. Mental hallucinations were novelties to me at that time, and for once Prospero had interested me.

"The universe, Edward, is a complex chemical equation which I am solving. On one side of this equation you have material manifestations of energy; on the other, the manifestations which we call mind and spirit."

"I think I have heard something like this before," I said, a little disappointed.

"The germ of my philosophy, Edward, is to be found in Confucius and repeats itself again in the sayings attributed to Buddha."

"Indeed?"

"Positive matter is the male essence; negative matter, the female. The ultimate quintessence emanating from the supreme source is a wave vibration independent of time and space. As this travels outward through the atoms and molecules of the ultimate solid—these atoms and molecules which we call stars and planets and which compose this solid—the combinations between these positive and negative ions or wave vibrations produce the varying manifestations of mind and matter. They are all self-perpetuating, yet always passing into new forms. Thus matter begets matter; thought, thought."

"It sounds as plausible as any explanation," I said politely, turning over a page of my book. "I'm going to bed," and I shut myself up in my bedroom. I had had philosophy enough for one evening.

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For a week or ten days Prospero worked steadily and amazingly in the laboratory. He did his experiments with skill, ease, and rapidity; furthermore, he put no obstacles in the way of my keeping full records of his work. One day, however,

when he returned in the afternoon he was much depressed. His cigarette reappeared upon his lower lip and he spilt its ashes into various mixtures, until, in a rage, he hurled an egg-shell Bohemian glass beaker partly full of nitric acid into a far corner of the room. By acting promptly I saved the factory from a fire and the room from any serious damage. Prospero contemplated me gloomily when I had finished clearing up his mess.

"That's a little too risky to be funny," I rebuked him, with pardonable annoyance. "It's all right to have nerves for one's personal pleasure, but endangering company property is another matter."

His reply was a series of picturesque and obscene oaths. The final intimation was that the next time I might expect nitric acid or worse at my head, instead of at a corner of the room. He flatly refused to continue any more experiments that afternoon and sat until six o'clock watching a flickering electric current passing through a vacuum tube. I reported the situation to Knowlton at the office.

"What do you make of it, Ted?" Knowlton asked.

"Getting ready to shoot himself full of morphine, I take it."

"He hasn't any money."

"I think he probably has a reserve supply of the drug—a fiend isn't likely to be without it."

"H'm," mused Knowlton. "I wish we could search his baggage. Here, Ted, you'd better have this in case of emergency," and Knowlton took a revolver from his desk and offered it to me. I laughed.

"You are getting as melodramatic as old Prospero himself. Thank you just the same, but I never use them," and I handed it back.

"If he should take a dislike to you, look out, Ted. Let me know if it continues. Paranoia is not a disease to ignore lightly."

"Paranoia?" I gasped in surprise.

"Sure. He's got all the symptoms—big head and the rest."

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Evening brought the explanation. It was not quite so bad as we had surmised. Upon entering my study I found a stout middle-aged woman seated there, fanning herself with a palm leaf fan. I was taken aback, I confess it, and at a loss for words. She saved me the trouble by saying, "Now, dearie, don't you worry about me. I'm waiting for Mr. de Fougère. I'm his wife."

"Yes?" I faltered. "Pray make yourself at home."

"You can trust me to do that, dearie, no matter where I am. I've slept twenty-five seasons in a tourist Pullman car. Home is where I find it, I always say."

"Twenty-five seasons in a Pullman?" My fatal curiosity was leading me into conversation in spite of myself.

"Yes, dearie, with the greatest show on earth. Ain't you never heard of *la belle Hélène*?—well, that's me—Risley act—I've been everything from the apex to the base of the human pyramid."

"Good God," I thought, "the circus woman! What on earth shall we do now?" I sat down rather suddenly.

"When do you expect John home? I sent him a telegraph I was coming this noon, but the skunk didn't meet me to the dépôt as I told him. Left me to find my way as best may be, the dirty hound! But I'll fix him!" and she fanned herself vigorously, for her emotion caused her profuse perspiration. "Has he been boozing again?" she continued.

"Mr. de Fougère should be here now," I said uneasily. "I can't think what's keeping him."

"Well, I can!" she announced with vigour. "He always gets drunk when he knows I'm coming—the coward!"

I thought it took some courage to drink with certain punishment waiting at the other end. Here was more than a mere headache.

"I suppose you're Teddy—just the age my oldest boy was when he made his first hit—I trained him myself. John has written me all about you. You won't mind me calling you Teddy?—I just have to mother something or I'm all at sea."

The conversation was taking an alarmingly intimate turn. At this opportune moment Prospero's voice was heard upon the stairs, carolling at the top of his lungs "Rolling down to Rio."

"That's him," said the ex-gymnast, getting elaborately upon her feet, "and he's pie-eyed!"

There was no exit through which I could retreat; Prospero's entrance would be by the only door. I lacked spirit to make a sudden dash by him. He arrived in the middle of the chorus, his silk hat, ruffled, over one ear.

"This is a nice way to meet me, ain't it? And you call yourself a man!" was his greeting.

"Woman, I defy you!" he challenged, "In the name of my ancestor, Charles Martel, King of France!"

"Go on, you drunken fool! You ain't no more French than what I am, except for your name, which is a fake, same as my stage name."

I edged toward the door, having stealthily secured my hat.

"You stay right where you are, Teddy dearie," the virago commanded. "John and me ain't got no secrets what can't be shouted from the house-tops, and he knows it. You stay and see justice done a poor old woman."

I apologetically referred to an engagement. It was no use.

"I want a witness to my treatment—I'm his legally, lawfully wedded wife, and he deserts me—and sends me no money—and gets drunk to my face. If there's justice on this earth, I'll have the law on him."

"Woman, you lie!" thundered John. "You're not my wife and never was. I'm sick and tired of you," he hiccupped. "You've ruined my life," and he sat heavily in a chair, being now in the maudlin stage. Yet his dramatic instinct did not desert him. He was a fine picture of despair as he sat there.

"Will you listen to him denying his own kith and kin," she shrieked.

"Insult me before my friend—go on, woman," moaned Prospero. "Poison the mind of youth against me."

"Poison your grandfather—I wish I had when he was a boy,

and I wouldn't be troubled with you now," was her subtle repartee to this.

"I shall not lower myself to retort that you are old enough to have had your wish"—Prospero uttered this dispassionately and with hardly an alcoholic stumble. There I was anxious to leave them, but the lady chose this opening for peculiarly noisy hysterics. I brought her a glass of water; she knocked it from my hands, smashing the glass to fragments.

"Better let May have it out by herself; it is easiest in the end," muttered Prospero. "Edward, when you learn to know the way of a woman with a man, you will lose all concern. She may do this for hours."

The latter statement caused me to flee. I went to the Otooska House and sought out Knowlton. He listened to my tale of woe with his customary grin. "Don't worry, Teddy," he said when I had finished, "she may prove a Godsend. He'll have something besides himself to think about now."

"But, man alive, they are in my rooms. I can't go on living there with the pair of them on my hands."

"Are you disturbed because of the proprieties?"

"Not entirely," I snapped. "Married or not, I don't care—but one drug fiend plus hysterics and broken crockery is more than I will stand."

"I'll move them in the morning," and that was the best compromise I could get.

Not a sound greeted my return. The lights in the study were out, the bedroom door closed, and all was apparently peace. With many inward maledictions on my companions I went to bed.

The six-o'clock alarm brought me with a start out of a sound sleep. As usual I dashed for a shower in the bathroom, to reach which I had to cross my study. To my consternation I encountered *la belle Hélène*, in flesh coloured tights and little else, violently exercising in the centre of the room with heavy dumbbells.

"Don't mind me, dearie," she said sweetly. "I'm just having

my morning bracer. I get so fleshy if I don't keep trained."

"Heaven forbid her from getting any heavier," I thought, as I ducked by. Upon my return I knocked on the door; the study was again empty.

I looked forward to the day's work with horror. Prospero came punctually at seven and la belle Hélène with him! The latter, I was told, had often assisted him and knew how to keep chemical apparatus clean and do many simple routine things. Prospero appeared resigned to his fate, and the three of us worked briskly and for the most part in silence.

"I always hold a man hasn't any sense with dishes," she said early in the proceedings, "even with these chemical things. Just as like as not you two will get things all mussed up. My land, how that one does smell! Why you don't poison yourselves I never could see."

Knowlton called upon us at eleven after he had finished the morning's mail and was formally introduced to la belle Hélène. Curiosity had evidently overpowered him. He kept a solemn face, but his eyes twinkled during the ceremony of introduction.

"Pleased to meet you," said la belle Hélène to him. "So you are John and Teddy's boss? My, you are a young-looking man to be running a factory like this. Nice seasonable weather, ain't it? Nice location out here, too, where you can see the lake from the windows. I always did like a nice view. I always say it makes a lot of difference what kind of a place you got to work in. In my business you can't be particular, though."

"I'm glad you are so favourably impressed with us," smiled Knowlton.

"My land, I'm used to anything after the life I've had. Brought up three boys to my business—one on 'em's been in vaudeville in Europe—I ain't heard from him in ten years, That's just like boys—off they go. Girls is more consoling, so they say. I ain't never had no experience with girls. Boys is trouble enough. Take things as they come, that's my motto every time. Home is where you find it, I always say."

Knowlton excused himself and departed.

Knowlton kept his word in a measure. Prospero and his companion were moved to a little two-room apartment on the floor above, and I was left in undisputed sway over my study. After they had been settled in the new abode, Knowlton dropped in to see me.

"Business is not in good shape, Ted," he said, lighting his cigar. "I've been all over our orders and books and found we are operating on too close a margin of capital. We have more orders than we have machines or cash to handle."

"That seems a strange difficulty to me. We are too prosperous. Is this the Senegambian you were looking for?"

"Exactly. Our friend Norwood, who sold us the business, loaded the books with orders to make a good showing. Now he has got out, and deliveries are up to us. Frankly, we haven't cash enough to swing it."

"What is the trouble just now?"

"We can't meet Saturday's payroll—we haven't enough at the bank. There's a big payment due us on a complete contract. If that comes in by Saturday noon we are O. K. If not, the bank has got to see us through; and that's where you come in again, Ted. I'm going to send you to talk to the bank president."

"Why me?" I protested. "Wouldn't he pay more attention to you?"

"It's just a hunch of mine, Teddy, and it'll be a good experience for you. If you don't get away with it, I'll try my hand."

Saturday noon was an exciting hour. The mail came at twelve; the men had to be paid off, in cash, at one. I had just sixty minutes to find out whether we pulled through or closed down. The post office was on the corner of State Street and the Park, the latter a large unkempt square with a feeble fountain and some fine old trees. I had made an appointment with the president of the Deep Harbor National Bank for twelve-

fifteen. A little before twelve I stood on the post office steps, with the key to the firm's box in my hand, waiting for the mail to be sorted. In my inner pocket was a statement of our resources and a list of our contracts.

The post office at noon was a famous gathering place for the citizenry of Deep Harbor. In front were a line of horses and buggies hitched to posts. The owners congregated mostly on the steps, chewing toothpicks and gossiping. Bootblacks and newspaper boys plied their trades. Every one seemed to know every one else, and each new comer was hailed by his first name or otherwise familiarly greeted. I felt that a stranger was at a great disadvantage in trying to conduct a factory in such an in-bred community. Not one of all those men knew me or nodded to me. Yet I judged from the glances directed my way and the whispers that many at least knew who I was. Knowlton had told me that the new owners of the factory had been the subject of many rumours. It was believed we were a blind for one of the large corporations about to begin operations in Deep Harbor on a vast scale.

At last the mail was ready, and I opened our box. Running through the pile of letters, I saw that the check was not there. First I telephoned Knowlton, then crossed the street to the Deep Harbor National Bank, a small box-like building built entirely of white marble in vague resemblance to a miniature Greek temple. My card was unnecessary. The president was seated, for all the world to see, behind a low mahogany railing before a high mahogany desk. He called me by name at my entrance and invited me inside his pen. There was nothing formidable in his appearance. My imagination had pictured the bank president of the stage, an elderly gentleman with white side whiskers, white spats, a sanctimonious air, and a terrible callousness in driving financial bargains. Instead, I beheld a genial young man of thirty-eight to forty with a genial expression on his face. His face was tanned, his hair, just turning grey at the temples, was neatly smoothed down. The eyes were a little too small, almost pig-like, in fact; nevertheless

his pleasant smile counteracted the unfavourable impression which his eyes would otherwise have made.

"Have a cigar, Edward?" were his opening words to me. The use of my Christian name encouraged me, for it seemed to imply that I had been admitted to citizenship in good standing. I accepted the greasy, aromatic cigar, although I feared a cigar before luncheon would be disastrous. There seemed, however, no escape in Deep Harbor from the offer of a cigar as a preliminary to any business discussion. As we lighted up and the sickeningly fragrant smoke oozed through my nervous system, he looked keenly at me and said: "Well, Edward, what can we do for you? Money, I suppose," and he glanced at the clock. "You have about forty minutes in which to meet your payroll. Am I right?"

"Absolutely!" I answered promptly. "And here's the reason why you'll meet the payroll for us," and I handed him our statement. He then did a slightly theatrical thing which, I suppose, the rôle of bank president required; it was to produce a pair of tortoise shell goggle spectacles and study our statement through them. I stared about at the onyx and bronze trimmings of the little building and secretly wished I could lose the cigar.

"These contracts look all right on paper, Edward, but you people haven't equipment enough to put them through."

"I don't imagine that we are the first people who have come to you because we are too prosperous—not in a growing town like Deep Harbor," I remarked, surprised at my own diplomacy.

"That's true enough, Edward. But the way I look at it is this. These contracts were made by your predecessors. If you don't make good on them you won't get any more, and you can't make good with your present plant. The friend who sold you the plant, about whom I happen to know a lot, oversold you. In short, you were stung."

"What's to be done?" I asked, rising.

"Sit down, Edward," he replied. "Is there any truth in this

story that a big corporation is behind you? I want brass tacks."

"There's not a word of truth in it. We are just what our books show us to be."

He smiled and chewed his cigar. "That's what I thought you would say," he chuckled. "What security do you offer?"

"Our notes at thirty days backed by the contracts which you will take over if we fall down."

"Not good enough, Edward. You must put up the plant."

With this he handed me the telephone which stood on his desk. I got through to Knowlton at the office, the while my financier-friend watched and listened. In the end, we had no option but to give way.

I left his office with our Saturday's payroll in a canvas bag, and I left behind a memorandum concerning the mortgage and security to be formally put up as soon as Knowlton could get down town.

CHAPTER FIVE

I ENTER DEEP HARBOR SOCIETY

“DON’T you think it is about time we got to know some of the important people in town—social stuff—country club and so on?” said Knowlton one evening as he looked at me through his cigar smoke with one of his quizzical grins.

“I’m not very keen about it,” I growled, for I was tired and sulky from a hard day, and Deep Harbor was resting somewhat heavily upon my nerves. “We’ve been here three months now, and not a solitary person has spoken to us except in the way of business.”

Knowlton went on: “Still, I think it’s bad business to keep away from them; we’ve got to know them. They haven’t chased after us, so we must chase after them.”

“Is there ever any other motive in your mind than a business one?” I exploded in disgust. This merely produced a particularly fiendish grin from Knowlton.

“Little inclined to kick over the traces tonight, aren’t you, Ted? I don’t blame you. You’ve had too long a dose without the right kind of relaxation. There must be plenty of nice people here if we could only get in touch with them. Better get out your Tuxedo and have it pressed. We’ll open a social campaign.”

I paid little attention to Knowlton’s latest plan; he was full of new schemes each day, all aimed at extending the scope of our business connections. Several days passed, and, as I heard no more of his calculated social ambitions, I concluded that pressure of more important affairs had mercifully excluded this new idea from his mind. Then one afternoon my call sounded on the buzzer, and I reported at the office.

Knowlton greeted me with the customary grin. “Busy out in the laboratory?”

"No more than usual," I replied noncommittally. I had learned that when Knowlton introduced a subject with a prelude of this kind it usually meant extra work was about to be proposed.

"No experiment that will keep you this evening?" he queried. Should I start one as a measure of self-protection and then say "Yes," or should I chance whatever new plan Knowlton had on foot and step into his obvious trap? I decided on the latter course for the sake of variety.

"No," I answered. "I shall close down with the whistle."

"Good. Then I have a dinner invitation for you—now, you are to go, Ted, it's no use putting your back up. I've practically accepted."

"Are you going?" I asked suspiciously.

"Why no, Ted, I'm not. In the first place I haven't been invited; and, second, they are not so much in my line."

"Who, where, when?" I tried to make this scornfully ironic, but I only drew a broader grin than before from Knowlton.

"You owe the honour of this invitation to Mr. Hemphill, of our office staff."

I snorted, this time with anger.

"That fat old bore!" I exclaimed.

Knowlton interrupted me. "Hush, Teddy. While I recognize a certain truth in your description, still you are to know that our Mr. Hemphill, although hard up, belongs to one of the first families of Deep Harbor. His wife helps run the social plant in this burg—she's superintendent of it, in fact, and issues or cancels all permits to circulate through the labyrinth. I've only recently made this important discovery. Hence your bid to dinner." Knowlton grinned triumphantly.

Hemphill was a particularly disagreeable figure in the outer office, for he always buttonholed one to listen to a tiresome anecdote.

"It's the wife, Ted, who runs the works—not old Charlie. I agree with you about him. Believe me, he's kept on his good behaviour at home." Knowlton pressed his buzzer. "I'll have him in and tell him you've accepted."

I saw it was useless to protest. Hemphill appeared at the door, and I looked more closely than heretofore at my prospective host. Across his fat red face there spread an oily smile which sank on each side into a coarse iron-grey stubble. His forehead was high and greasy above two small blue eyes, beneath which were pouches of red skin. His hair, stiff and grey like the growth on his face, was worn pompadour and trimmed to make his head appear flat on top. Over the most conspicuously Falstaffian detail of his anatomy hung a heavy gold watch chain carrying many seals indicative of his membership in fraternal organizations. In the lapel of his coat was an enameled button as further proof of his fellowship.

"Mr. Hemphill," said Knowlton, "Ted accepts with pleasure your invitation to dine at your house this evening."

"That's fine, Mr. Jevons," he replied. "That certainly helps us out of a hole." I pricked up my ears. "Mrs. Hemphill was terrible put out because one of her regular young men was called to Pittsburgh to look after a pig-iron contract. His going kind of bust up the dinner party. I didn't think it mattered much myself, but you know what women are about such things. Wouldn't do to have one of the girls left without a beau, so I says, to make peace in the family, 'How about asking young Teddy out to the works?' Of course Sally—that's my wife—didn't care much about ringing in a stranger that way, but I said to her, says I, 'Shucks, Teddy's all right—nice, quiet boy, European education, and quite a swell where he comes from, according to what I've heard.' Well, that sort of quieted her, and finally she says to me—'Go ahead and ask him. I can't have my dinner party spoiled.' So that's how I came to put the proposition up to you," he concluded.

I saw Knowlton playing with his paper knife and making desperate efforts not to catch my eye or grin. My indignation all but boiled over.

"I'm deeply flattered"—I began, but at this point Knowlton pressed his buzzer. A stenographer hurried in. "Get me New York on the 'phone," he commanded. "That's all, Teddy. Be there at quarter of seven," and both Hemphill and I found our-

selves dismissed without further ceremony. I surrendered in despair. What was the use of fighting? But I made up my mind to be so silent a partner in the evening's proceedings that never again would my services be in demand for filling a gap at a dinner table. Really my rage at being patronized by such people made my hands shake so that my work in the laboratory was useless for the rest of the afternoon. I tingled all over and longed for some way to square the score. I was going to my first dinner party in Deep Harbor like a man from Blankley's—practically hired out for the evening.

I left at ten minutes before six to allow myself a larger margin for dressing. I stopped at the office, but the wise Knowlton had eluded me by going home at half-past five. There was no one with whom I could lodge a final protest.

I dressed in a savage mood. Many caustic epigrams occurred to me as I brushed my hair. I hoped I could remember them for later use that evening. One never can remember a rehearsed conversation; it's like trying to use a handy phrase-book in a foreign country. The other side never leads up to one's cues. At last I was ready, and punctually at a quarter before seven I presented myself before the door of a large old-fashioned house set amid the maples of Myrtle Boulevard, Deep Harbor's most fashionable residential street. The house had been built, I judged, about or immediately after the period of the Civil War. It was square, with a door in the middle flanked on either side by long oval-topped windows. Projecting from the door and coming to meet one in a flight of brown stone steps, was a porch heavily ornamented with what appeared to be a Turco-Bulgarian style of design. In any event, this feature of the house was compounded of strange samples of the carpenter's craft, turned in oriental arabesques such as an architect might dream of after a hasty reading of *Kubla Khan*. Apart from the wanton outburst of the approach, the house was most solemn and dignified, with severe lines, its flat roof topped off by a little square cupola from which I fancied it would be fun to watch for Malbrouck's return from the wars. My curiosity to see within was fully

aroused by the time I rang the doorbell. It was always a bother to remember that one was supposed to be angry; I had forgotten my chosen rôle and caught myself anticipating the evening.

Hemphill himself opened the black walnut front door with its silver plated knobs. As he did so a feminine voice called imperiously "Charles, Mary Ellen will answer the door!" "Alas for Charles," thought I, "the warning has come too late—the deed is done and I am within." Mary Ellen was visible on the horizon of the passage which ran straight through the centre line of the house. Upon seeing what had happened she fled to the rear with a report of the situation at the front. Hemphill, much embarrassed and evidently suffering some anxiety concerning the immediate future, helped me off with my coat. He hung it up upon a black walnut hatrack with which its designer had incorporated a slab of white marble. We entered a room upon the right with an extraordinarily high ceiling. The room was perfect early Victorian down to the last detail of crocheted anti-macassars on the backs of dull red plush chairs. To my great delight an engraving of *The Monarch of the Glen* and of *Dignity and Impudence* occupied the positions of honour upon the walls. There was also a scene in *Venice*, by Ruskin. Over all, however, was the shabbiness of respectable poverty which descends upon great possessions when they become relics of a vanished prosperity. I was so absorbed with my delight in the room—I decided on the spot to put it into a novel some day—that I overlooked for a moment the assembly gathered there. But I was soon aware of a tall, stern-lipped woman in an evening dress corresponding to the period of the room, bearing down upon me.

"Mother," said Hemphill (I was certain this was a tactless epithet), "this is Teddy."

She shook hands icily as she surveyed me. My evening clothes were London made; I felt quite calm about this ordeal. I noticed a perceptible thaw, although nothing excessive, when she greeted me after inspection. Behind her came a tall girl of about nineteen, who was already a pale replica of her

mother—the same angularity, particularly about the neck and shoulders, but in her eyes her father's meekness in the presence of authority. It was not a house of divided counsels, I decided, after another glance at the mother.

"My daughter Edith," mama announced. Edith dropped her eyes and modestly resisted my efforts to shake hands with her. "My sister, Mrs. Martin," was the next in line—a stout elderly lady in alpaca and cameos, who walked with the aid of an ivory stick. She wasn't unlike the Queen, taking her in silhouette. I was much struck by the similarity in types all the way from Windsor to Deep Harbor. I murmured something, intended as a compliment, to Mrs. Martin about the resemblance.

"Good gracious, I hope I'm not so old or so fat as all that!" came the crushing retort. Evidently the path of tact in a new country was going to be strewn with unforeseen difficulties. I reddened. It was disconcerting to break a cucumber frame as soon as one entered the garden. "Miss Helen Claybourne," I heard Mrs. Hemphill continue. I looked up, hope abandoned, to encounter two large serious grey eyes gazing at me with frank curiosity. I started, for they were beautiful eyes set wide apart beneath a high, well-modelled brow, over which soft light brown hair waved most alluringly. A straight nose and firm chin completed a face that was not only full of character, but also good to look upon. I was enough of a snob to note that her clothes were right and that her athletic figure carried them magnificently. She shook hands heartily and frankly; her grasp was warm and pleasant, strong as a boy's, but womanly too. My rout was complete; I could find words in the gaze of those grey eyes which seemed to say "We believe in the truth." I felt humble and apologetic; one should first crave audience before daring to speak to those eyes. The next reaction was one of anger that a girl—she couldn't be over eighteen—had so abashed me.

There were others present, both men and women, but they did not exist for me. I heard their names mentioned and could not remember them; I went around the room shaking

hands and trying to repeat the necessary conventional phrases, but I stammered and stuttered and bumped into the furniture. Everywhere I felt two large grey eyes burning holes in the middle of my back. It was a great relief when we filed into the dining room. I was half hopeful and half fearful that I should be given Miss Claybourne to take down; I wasn't. My seat was next to Mrs. Martin for safe keeping, while grey eyes sat across from me and talked to an aggressive looking saphead in a watered silk waistcoat. My conversation was nil; my earlier break with Mrs. Martin discouraged me there, while she was now most absorbed in her food. I tried to hear something of what was said across the table, but in vain. Occasionally grey eyes looked in my direction, but without friendliness or even recognition. I sank into gloom and despair. Early in the dinner I hoped for a glass of wine to cheer me up. There was a slender empty glass beside the iced water at my plate. That hope was dashed when Mary Ellen filled these slender glasses with mineral water from a bottle most artfully concealed in a napkin. Occasionally, Hemphill burst into anecdote, but usually these sallies of his were sternly suppressed by the voice of the skipper at the other end of the table. The latter carried on a marvellous sign language with the harassed Mary Ellen, to whom dinner parties on this scale were obviously a novelty. When she wasn't signalling Mary Ellen in a code of frowns and nods, Mrs. Hemphill spent her time searching with one foot for a mysterious bell that was concealed somewhere beneath the table. At last the dinner was over, and we all adjourned to the front room. There was no smoking for the men; I was thus bereft of my last hoped-for consolation.

In the drawing room little tables were set out, and Mrs. Hemphill announced that we would now play hearts. We were given beribboned tags with our table number on them, and this time luck smiled upon me; I drew grey eyes as my partner. Miss Hemphill, pale and wan as a tallow candle, was also at our table. The other man I have forgotten. I tried to be light-hearted and amusing from the start, but made

such a sad mess of it that grey eyes began to look at me with unmistakable disapproval.

"Have you been in Deep Harbor long?" she asked me just as I made an atrocious misplay. In some way this harmless-seeming question implied censure. Like Benedick, I thought "There is a double meaning in that." I retorted rather sharply: "Only three months." Grey eyes lifted her eyebrows the merest fraction. I regretted bitterly the tone of my reply, but it was too late.

"How does it happen that no one has met you?" she questioned quite calmly, without any apparent trace of rudeness in her voice. The effect was withering upon me; no school-girl could patronize me or cast doubts upon my social eligibility—at least, not in Deep Harbor. She knew I was angry and turned with some laughing remark to the other man, thus effectually squelching my intended retort, for which, however, I was still groping. The hand soon ended, and partners were changed. Although grey eyes was my opponent for another game, she did not address any but necessary remarks to me, while I continued to play badly and silently. With the conclusion of this game she progressed to another table, and Mrs. Martin once more descended upon me. The old lady took ample revenge upon me for likening her to the Queen. She commented adversely upon each play I made, and in between times lectured me upon might-have-beens. The result was that I remained at the bottom table all the evening.

At ten o'clock the orgy was suspended, and to my amazement I saw grey eyes approaching me. I scrambled hastily to my feet, determined to make all possible amends. She handed me a little package tied with tissue paper and ribbon.

"I have been asked to present you with the booby prize," she said with a dangerous twinkle in the grey eyes. My chagrin almost choked me. Suddenly I felt lonely; I wanted her to be friendly with me. I wanted to beg her for a kind word. Instead I bowed and took my prize from her hands, feeling I had richly earned it.

"And now," said her soft, gentle voice, "you may take me into the dining room and get me some ice-cream."

My heart leaped with gratitude; the kind word had come unsought. She took my arm quite as if we had been good friends for some time, and I floated into the other room with her, trailing, as it were, a cloud of glory. We found ice-cream, coffee, and marvelous rich cake oozing chocolate! There was a couch over by a bay window, and without more words we ensconced ourselves snugly on it. Her profile was almost severely beautiful—a classic outline like that of a Greek Venus. I studied it with delight for along with its serene beauty was an intellectual charm, easily recognizable, but impossible to describe in specific terms. For twenty blessed minutes we talked—of nothing important; yet learned to know one another with bewildering speed. I have no recollection of what we said; words came and were approved on both sides. Sympathetic echoes were felt rather than expressed. We were a little formal, not quite sure as yet that such sympathy was real and not a dream. Then we were aware that the dinner party were beginning to bid the hostess good-bye. With unspoken reluctance we came out of our corner.

"May I see you home?" I whispered with anxious heart-beats.

"Yes," she smiled, "I live just across the street."

Mrs. Hemphill must have been amazed at the gratitude I showered upon her for her invitation. I wrung Mr. Hemphill's hand with enthusiasm, as Helen glided up to me and took my arm. It was an exit in triumph.

Across the street we paused for a moment outside her front door.

"Good-night," I said. "Dream true."

"I'm not yet the Duchess of Towers," came her reply, as she vanished through the door. So she knew *Peter Ibbetson*!

Turning toward my little flat on the other side of the town came to me the bitter after the sweet. She had not invited me to call! I had not liked to ask, held back by a kind of stupid

pride. Besides, I had been most certain she would ask me, and she hadn't. The rest of my walk was deep in gloom again.

Knowlton was sitting up for me. He made free of my rooms whenever he liked.

"Well," he greeted me, "how do you like the F. F.'s of Deep Harbor?"

"The dinner party was rather mixed, but on the whole not bad."

"From that I infer that the mixture contained at least one charming ingredient."

This shot was too near home for comfort; therefore I did not deign a reply.

"Don't forget to make your party call," grinned Knowlton at me as I undressed.

"I am not in the habit of overlooking dinner calls," I snapped back at him.

After Knowlton had grinned himself out of my rooms I sat on the edge of my bed and meditated. It was good to have pleasant thoughts again and to believe that a large part of the world was contained in a pair of grey eyes. "I am not in love," I considered, as I struggled, with the aid of a fountain pen, to say something appropriate in my diary. The devil of diaries is, unless one is a Mr. Pepys, that all the appropriate things are said on the uneventful, unemotional days. "No, it isn't love—it's recognition of kinship"—like some one in an old Greek story, after many wanderings I had, quite by chance, stumbled upon a woman, and when we had compared the tokens each of us carried, behold, they fitted perfectly! "I am not yet the Duchess of Towers," she said. "Not yet"—then I again thought of Benedick and the dangers of inference founded upon feminine remarks. I had not been asked to call. For all I knew it was over. I might never see her again. I took down a copy of William Morris's "The Sundering Flood," for I remembered the heroine had grey eyes. All of William Morris's heroines had, I reflected. It was part of the pre-Raphaelite scheme of interior decorating; nevertheless

it was comforting to read of grey-eyed beauty, especially as the pages of the diary blankly refused to be written upon. It grew late, and it was hard to separate my thoughts, my dreams, and what I was reading from the other. Indeed, they blended most deliciously—a sort of sentimental intoxication giving me a glimpse of the earthly paradise. Yet Reason kept whispering that it wasn't love; that I was mistaking sentimental self-deception for reality. "What a colossal and ridiculous structure you are erecting upon nothing," said Reason. "Upon a pair of grey eyes," I retorted. "Empires have been built upon less." "Ah," came back Reason, "that pair of grey eyes cared nothing for you, or they would have asked you to call." That was, for the moment, unanswerable. I was annoyed at Reason for waking me up, and for spite decided to write a poem. I was not in the habit of writing verses, for I had an abominable ear for rhythm. Nevertheless, writing a sonnet was the most efficient way of banishing Reason for that night. I got as far as the idea—something about two travellers in the desert of life meeting by chance at a well-rim, only to part again—when, mercifully, sleep overcame me; disgustingly sound, dreamless sleep, and I knew no more until next morning's alarm.

I got up to find Reason, reinforced by her auxiliary, bright sunshine, most firmly in the saddle. Ahead loomed a factory and a seven-o'clock whistle; gone were the magic shadows of the night and all the enchanted garden of sentimental fancies. I attacked my test tubes in a frenzy of efficiency. My eye was clear and my hand steady; ideas flowed fast. Reason was triumphant. Then came a telephone call for me; Reason came a nasty cropper under Instinct's sudden leap. I knew what the call meant before I took the receiver down. Knowlton's cynical eye was upon me as I answered; I cared nothing for him this time.

"This is Helen Claybourne," came a soft voice over the wire.

"Yes, I know," I said; not perhaps the right words.

"I am glad you remember"—I felt her smile, half naïve, half mischievous. "I meant last evening to ask you to call,

and I forgot." Reason's forces fled in a panic, scattered by the wild surge of my blood. "Mother will be pleased to have you next Thursday, if that is convenient."

"I'm awfully grateful," I stammered feebly. Why wouldn't words come?

"Until Thursday, then," the heavenly voice said calmly, and there was a click in my ear. The receiver had been hung up at the other end.

"Gratitude is a feeling I never before heard you express," commented Knowlton drily, as I turned away with a sigh, tingling from head to foot. I was reckless with a wild, joyous insanity.

"Philosophy is a fool, Knowlton," I exclaimed gaily, "as you recall Hamlet long ago pointed out to Horatio, not in just these words. Nor does a peripeteia necessarily carry with it a tragic catastrophe, Aristotle notwithstanding."

"You crazy idiot," remarked Knowlton, "I'm not going to send you to any more parties if you come back with a hang-over. You certainly have a hell of a classic education for a chemist," he added, "and how you like to show it off! What was that word you used—perry what?"

"Peripeteia, you mean," I condescended. "It is a reversal of fortune, marking the turning point of a Greek tragedy."

"Well, I'll show you a first-class American tragedy if you don't go back to your lab and work," he grinned. "I don't admire the influence of the female sex upon you, Ted."

"You are generalizing from a single example," I flung back as I left the room.

It was Tuesday, and Thursday seemed further away than does the week-end viewed from Monday morning. Knowlton pursued me remorselessly, trying to make me confess who my new friend was. All his cross-examinations were in vain. I took delight in hugging my happiness to myself, and in answering Knowlton's questions in the most extravagant and flam-buoyant language I could think of. In the end I could not tell whether he was amused or annoyed. I worked night and day

in the laboratory to pass the time. My hopes were soaring so high that I trembled for fear that Reason's sunbeams would melt the wax of their wings and send us crashing down. And with my work Knowlton was content. Industry was the sure pass to his favour.

On Thursday at the noon hour, however, Knowlton exploded a bombshell.

"We are going to work the plant twenty-four hours a day, Ted," he announced, "and I've put you in charge of the night-shift, beginning tonight."

My throat went dry. Which of the seven devils of hell had led him to choose this night of all nights?

"It's tough on you, Ted, for you'll have to work right through the whole twenty-four hours the first day. But I want you to let the lab go tonight and simply act as superintendent. You'll be able to snatch some sleep in the office."

"I have an engagement this evening—it's very awkward," I began.

"Well, you've got two now, and the one at the factory is the one you'll keep."

In spite of Knowlton's decisiveness, we reached a compromise. He agreed to let me off from six o'clock until midnight, provided I would make up the time later, a concession which I eagerly accepted.

A few minutes after eight found me walking out Myrtle Boulevard, Deep Harbor's street of streets, toward the Claybourne residence. I had dressed in dinner clothes with exceeding care; no one could have guessed that my business for most of the night was to superintend the night-shift at a factory. The latter task was infinitely remote; if it crossed my mind at all, it was only as something mechanical, to be wound up later and left to run by itself. The important matter in hand was to verify first impressions concerning a pair of grey eyes.

A maid opened the door of a pleasant oak-panelled hallway, and before I had time to get my bearings the grey eyes were introducing me to "Mother." In an instant I had the

feeling that the latter was not prepared to be enthusiastic. Strange young men from the outlands, of unknown origin, were evidently to be resisted. I looked at her closely, as I made my best and politest bow, hoping that my manners might carry a little conviction. Mrs. Claybourne was short and sallow, the latter caused, as I was later to learn, by her mania for tinkering with her health. She was a little fretful, with a tendency to imply that the world was not very considerate. "I told Helen I was too tired tonight to be very entertaining," was her wail, as I shook hands, "but she would ask you."

"We are not going to bother you at all, mother dear," Helen, as I dared think of her, interposed hastily. "Now do sit down in your big chair and read your magazine. We are going out on the side porch."

"Mr. Claybourne is at the club playing cards. I must apologize for his not being here—but then he seldom is," Mrs. Claybourne went on plaintively. "Helen, this room is so untidy it's a positive disgrace. I do think you might have Jane straighten it up a little when you expect callers. No one ever thinks of me. My nerves make me a very poor housekeeper, Mr. Jevons."

The room appeared to me most comfy and homelike. There were books and magazines and the atmosphere of a place in which people really lived. I murmured some deprecatory reply as Helen took me out on to the side porch. The latter was a heavenly place shut in by vines heavy with the odour of honeysuckle. There were deep wicker-basket chairs and a marvellous couch-like hammock. Unlike the Deep Harbor with which I was familiar, this spot was quiet and restful. The early October air was tinged with a delicious hint of frosts to come; the stars shone large and clear; the Milky Way seemed fairly to romp across the sky.

"You mustn't mind mother," said Helen, as we sat in two of the large chairs. "She isn't quite happy unless she has a grievance."

I laughed. It was so like the comment I had hoped her

capable of making. "I'm afraid I'm her grievance tonight—I wish I thought a happy one."

"I'm afraid that's partly true," Helen replied. "Mother is an extreme stickler for the conventions. She complains that no one knows who you are. It was useless for me to tell her that I knew you and didn't care who you are—Mother says I am hopelessly of this generation—and regards that as an argument against you. I finally told her you were coming anyway—and, well—" she laughed,—"here you are."

So she had defended me and fought for me! My invitation to call was therefore no mere empty social form such as common politeness toward a stranger, but an offer of friendship.

"I really can set your mother's mind at rest," I said. "I belong to one or two decent clubs—so does my father—"

"Please don't—I'm not asking for a passport," she interrupted. "As for mother, she will get used to you in time."

This was encouraging, for it deliberately implied other calls to come. Of course, the upshot was that I told her all about myself, pouring out the pent-up loneliness accumulated since my arrival. She listened as only a sympathetic girl can listen to a man talking endlessly about himself. At times there came delicious silences during which we stared at the stars, and again a gentle question from her would start me off once more. It was with a shock that we suddenly noticed "mother" silhouetted in the doorway.

"Helen!" came the complaining voice. "It's half past ten." "Good Lord, I groaned inwardly, "I might have stayed all night." I rose hastily, Helen more deliberately.

"Very well, mother," her soft voice said, "Ted is just going." It was the first time she had called me Ted. I fell over a wicker tabouret in my delirium. As we passed into the living room, Mrs. Claybourne buttonholed me.

"Have you a grandfather, young man?"

Helen's shocked "Mother!" was unheeded.

"Yes, Mrs. Claybourne, I had. He was colonel of one of your northern regiments in the Civil War. His sword hangs

over my desk. I shall be pleased to show it you some day at tea."

"Mother! How could you?" again from Helen, and she laid her hand, just for a second, ever so lightly, on my arm.

The effect of my statement I observed to be favourable. The "good-night" Mrs. Claybourne gave me was less chilly than the earlier "good evenings." Helen went with me to the door.

"Do you ride?" she asked, with a change of subject that surprised me.

"Yes—or, rather, I did before coming to Deep Harbor."

"Then get a horse and be here at nine next Sunday morning. Good-night, Ted."

"Good-night, Helen. Thank you for tonight."

I left in such entranced good humour with the world that I forgot to change my clothes before reporting at the factory; and so it happened that the superintendent of the first night-shift performed his duties in what my tailor had informed me were "faultless" evening clothes. The result was to make Knowlton's grin wider than usual when I appeared to relieve him.

"Ted, you've got more nerve than I gave you credit for, if you face our gang in a clawhammer. However, lots of folks have original ideas when they try suicide. If you are lynched before morning don't forget I warned you."

"You need not worry," I said with dignity. "I'm fairly good friends with most of our men."

"All right, Ted. Some get theirs shooting tigers; others falling off the Alps; still others by being just plain damn fools. I'm thinking you'll look a little strange on your way to breakfast aboard the seven-five trolley."

At this I turned a little pale; I had not thought of the journey back by broad daylight. It was too late to back out. I went down to the machine shop with my fortitude somewhat shaken, only to discover my fears groundless and Knowlton's warning unnecessary. No one but an occasional apprentice or mechanic's helper so much as bothered to look at me, much

less make any comment. The office might always have worn similar regalia, as far as outward signs were concerned.

Until about one in the morning I found the factory by night a picturesque place. Every machine was running at full capacity. Overhead blinking white arc lamps, whose rays were shot through with spluttering purple, danced and hissed. At the lathes grey-headed merchants, fine-looking shrewd-faced men most of them, bent and peered at the Medusa-like tresses of steel the tools sheered off from the castings. Helpers leaned over them with wire-enclosed electric bulbs, lighting up the faces of the chief actors as in a theatre. Belts raced and flapped from noisy shafts along the ceiling—a steady, uninterrupted din. An occasional machine would shriek or groan in the agony of its task. Further down the shop the compressed air chisels were beating a devil's tattoo against the rougher castings. Boys trundled trucks piled with metal parts on their way from one machine to another. Foremen, pad and pencil in hand, went about keeping a record of each machine's progress. The place smelt of hot oil, of grimy cotton waste, and of sweaty human bodies.

As the novelty of the picture wore off I became sleepy and bored. By two o'clock it was clear that as superintendent I had a sinecure. This automaton of a factory was quite capable of running itself. No one referred any questions to me or asked my advice. I lingered hopefully here and there when I saw a machine slow down or stop for a moment, but whatever the reason of these stoppages, I was not consulted.

Upstairs to the laboratory I went, leaving word with the chief foreman where I was to be found. Work was out of the question; I was too sleepy. I tried my hand at a few pages in the diary—to recapitulate my thoughts on the subject of grey eyes. As usual when I most wanted to write or felt that I had a topic worth writing about, no words would come. I fell asleep in my chair once, with my feet upon my desk, to wake with a horrible start when they slid off with a thump. "Six weeks of this"—I thought with a shudder—"only the other

nights will not be quite so bad, because I am to do my regular work at night and sleep by day." A dreadful inversion of one's normal life, whichever way one looked at it. It meant bringing a midnight supper for one thing—and where was the restaurant in Deep Harbor to prepare a tempting supper? Then I was annoyed at myself because my mind had seized upon such a petty factor as a question of supper to magnify into importance.

I tried to get back to grey eyes, but I was too sleepy to be sentimental. What was it we were to do Sunday? Oh, yes—go for a ride. Where? I wondered. Heavens! I had no riding clothes! I scribbled a hasty memorandum and heard the town hall clock strike three. "Take a look around once an hour," Knowlton had said. "To make sure, punch the clock in the front office each time you pass." To punch a clock was to register one's number on a circular mechanism which also recorded the time as well. My number was seven. As I had rather resented being numbered, Knowlton allowed me to choose my own. His was one. I remember choosing seven because it was lucky. At this point I pulled myself together and started another tour.

Hour by hour the endless night went by; the dawn, turning the lake to mauve and next to gold, gave promise that soon the factory gates would open to let me pass. I was tired—too tired to think or care for anything but bed. I had still to report to Knowlton when I successfully passed the ordeal of going down-town in evening clothes. Fortunately I was able to borrow a raincoat.

"Run home and get all the sleep you can. You are off until six this evening."

At two in the afternoon I awoke; and, try as I would, further sleep was impossible. I got up, had a shower, and telephoned Helen. Of course her mother answered. It appeared that Helen was out, nor, to judge from her mother's explanations, did there seem any likelihood Helen would ever be home again. "Something will have to be done about mama," I reflected.

What was it I must do today? Oh, yes—riding clothes. I hurried out in search of a tailor who would engage himself on his honour to make me riding clothes by Sunday morning. Two declared it could not be done by mortal man, since it was now Friday afternoon; one was doubtful. He had heard of things done in such haste, but was skeptical concerning results. I insulted him into accepting the commission. Our contract was finally settled on the basis of midnight Saturday or no pay. "Where does one obtain horses in this town?" I pondered, strolling down State Street, which was respectable for four blocks and most ragged and disreputable top and bottom. At Frazee's famous soda-water-and-candy store whom should I see inside but Helen! After all, the coincidence was not so remarkable, I muttered. If one were out at all in Deep Harbor one was limited to State Street's four blocks of stores or to Myrtle Boulevard. The rest of the town was chiefly built up of slums and factories, except for one or two lesser streets on which people lived, but never walked. I went in to Frazee's and only needed Helen's welcoming smile to join her at the little marble-topped table.

"What on earth are you eating?" I asked, not very polite, as I pointed at a little mess in a dish before her.

"That is a chocolate nut sundae," she laughed. "Won't you try one?"

"Are they very sweet?" I inquired doubtfully.

"Of course!" and she presented a brimming spoon to me to taste. I was honored by the compliment, but the sickeningly sweet compound all but did for me. I had not yet eaten, for I was too tired in the morning and had forgotten about it after I got up. Helen was delighted with the face I made over it.

"I think I prefer more solid food," I apologized. "My education stopped with ice-cream sodas."

"I think it's a great lark meeting you here like this! Mother would be furious!"

"Isn't it done?" I asked in all seriousness, looking about at Frazee's unlimited display of white marble, enamel, and

nickel trimmings. It seemed a harmless looking place to me.

"Of course not, you silly Ted. What do you suppose Deep Harbor would say if we did this very often?"

"Is Deep Harbor loquacious?"

"Extremely."

"But the place is full of young couples—just like ourselves."

Helen laughed. "If I explain, you'll think me snobbish, Ted, and I'm not, even if mother is. Don't you see—all these boys and girls—well that's what Deep Harbor is like."

"I understand perfectly, now I think it over. I should be very careful where I took you to tea at home—and we'd have to have official sanction to go at all . . . Deep Harbor is like the rest of the world."

Again she laughed, and her grey eyes danced. "Ted, you really must give up thinking we are strange aborigines. But I feel the same way you do when I come back from boarding school—until I settle down again."

"I suppose it's the old prejudice against the new and strange," I said. .

"You've just said Deep Harbor is like the rest of the world, Ted."

"It is," I said, looking at her until she dropped her eyes.

"Always conceding that you know the world, Ted," she added slyly, looking up suddenly from under her lashes.

"I've seen quite a lot of it."

"Is that the same as knowing it?"

"No, but it's a start."

"Goodness me, Teddy, I ought to be home by now," she exclaimed, springing up. Women are apt to break off a conversation just as it is getting interesting.

"May I walk home with you?"

"That would never do, Teddy."

I looked so disappointed that she softened. "You may come part way. That will be enough for Myrtle Boulevard for one afternoon."

"What do you mean?"

"The porches are full at this time, Ted, and I know every living soul on Myrtle Boulevard."

I walked a few paces in silence.

"I must see your father—I can show him some letters—"

"Ted, you won't do anything so insanely silly."

"But what can I do?"

"If I were you," she remarked demurely, "I'd try staying on my very best behaviour." Her eyes flashed mischief as she said this.

"Does every inquisitive idiot in Deep Harbor know me by sight?"

"Be careful, Ted, how you refer to our upper circles," she laughed. "Of course they know you, silly boy. You buy a factory from one of our prominent business men, come all the way from London, speak to no one, live a mysterious life all by yourself, with a strange piratey-looking cutthroat—"

"Prospero!" I exclaimed.

"Prospero! Delicious name!" she echoed. "Well, you do all these things and then imagine you are invisible. Could any one but a man be so stupid?"

"There does seem to be something in what you say," I gurgled humbly. Her laugh this time was loud and joyous enough to add to Myrtle Boulevard's suspicions.

"Any one with any common sense would have presented his letters of introduction at the beginning."

"How do you know I have any?"

"Oh, dad had the bank look up all your connections, of course, when you borrowed money for the pay roll. He's a director. He told me all about it."

"This is a chatty little village"—I said with a very feeble effort at withering sarcasm.

"So you see, Ted, dad and I know you are all right,—only mother and the rest rather stick at your not presenting yourself properly. It will take a lot of grandfather to get around that!"—and she went off again into peals of laughter.

"Helen, you don't believe—"

She cut me off. "Ted. I make friends with whom I please, and no explanations are necessary, unless I ask for them."

"But there wasn't—"

"That will do, Teddy. You must turn back now," and she went on, leaving me with one last protest hanging in mid-air. I looked at my watch, as one always does in the street to cover embarrassment. It was quarter to six! By dashing up a side street and running after an electric car I arrived at the office exactly with the whistle.

CHAPTER SIX

I GO FOR A RIDE ON SATAN

MY precious riding clothes were delivered Saturday night, somewhat to my surprise. I tried them on at a private dress rehearsal before going to bed.

By eight in the morning I was under way to a certain livery and feed stable that had been recommended and found that no progress had yet been made with saddling my chosen horse—or even with the grooming of the angular-looking brute. A tip spurred the hostler's efforts, and finally Satan was as presentable as a horse possessing his peculiar anatomy could be. The beast was an underfed Western broncho somewhat past the first bloom of youth. His eye was not confiding, showing too much white; the manipulation of his ears confirmed the moroseness indicated by his eyes. The poor animal's bony frame was seared all over with hieroglyphic brands proclaiming service under the dynasties of many ranches; he was as interesting to study as the panels on an Egyptian tomb. I suspected that much of the important history of the Far West was engraved upon him. The question of riding him, however, was a matter of Hobson's choice, for the other animals were fat ladies' cobs mainly used in harness.

When Satan and I appeared before Helen's house there were half a dozen other horses, both good and bad, tethered in front or watched over by grooms. It was to be quite a large party, I noted, with considerable disappointment. Helen came out immediately, looking radiant in a linen riding habit, black sailor hat, and shiny boots. Why is it that a smart riding habit is the most becoming costume a woman can wear? She invited me in to await the others. Her father met us in the entrance hall. He was a typical clear-cut business man, with a rigid mous-

tache, a keen eye, and a hearty hand-clasp. He looked a little searchingly at me, but was friendly. Mother, on the other hand, was certain it was going to rain; the whole party was a foolish idea; we ought to go to church; horses were never safe, and so on. Helen kept up an automatic "Yes, mother," "Now don't worry about us, mother," with what I thought was angelic patience.

The others were not long in getting ready. Among them was Miss Hemphill; the rest were strangers to me. There were two more girls, besides Helen and Miss Hemphill, and three other men, one of whom was a dapper German who spoke but little English. Helen told me he was a cavalry officer visiting German-American relatives in Deep Harbor. I was detailed to talk to him because I had fragments of his language and could at least understand him. He clicked his heels and bowed with the customary Prussian stiffness that carried me back at a bound to a week once spent in Berlin. I was curious to know what he was doing in Deep Harbor. There was, however, no opportunity at that time for me to pump him, for Helen ordered us to horse.

We made quite a cavalcade down Myrtle Boulevard, going two by two, with Helen and me in the lead. Behind us rode the German, lavishing most studied attention upon Miss Delia Greyson, who, Helen said, was one of Deep Harbor's heiresses. I felt quite shabby on poor old Satan alongside Helen's neat lady's mare, followed as we were by two superb horses belonging to the Greysons' stables. The German, who was called Lieutenant Ludwig von Oberhausen, took pains to make his horse show off, a thing which caused my Western democratic beast to make vicious threats at such carryings on. I was obliged to ask the Herr Lieutenant to have a care that Satan did not plant his heels where they would be undesirable. The Lieutenant raised his eyebrows and said "Ach so?"—not very pleasantly.

"What have I done to be punished with a German?" I asked Helen, after the Lieutenant had curvetted into Satan and

me for about the tenth time. Helen laughed. "Why, we think him very nice. He's quite an important man in his own country."

"Oh, I'm sure of that," I retorted. "They all are, in their own estimation."

"Now, you've got to behave, Ted, and forget your nasty English prejudices. Ludwig is a wonderful horseman and dances adorably."

"Wouldn't you know it?" I thought to myself. "Of course the brute has his parlour tricks down perfectly"—but I was too canny to say this aloud.

"We'll ride on ahead of them, if he annoys," she conceded.

"By the way, Helen," I remarked as we reached the dusty and cinder-strewn outskirts to the eastward of Deep Harbor, "where are we going?"

"Haven't I told you, Ted? Oh, I always forget you don't know us. We are going where we often go—to a wonderful little inn to eat a chicken-and-waffle dinner."

"How far is it?" I enquired, for I was already aware that it had been several months since I had ridden a horse.

"Not over fifteen miles," she replied, quite unconscious of the shock her words were to me. A thirty-mile ride the first day! "We'll have a late supper at my house when we get back," she continued. "There's a lovely ravine north from the inn; we can ride up there to a little fairy waterfall. It's only two or three miles out of our way."

"It sounds delightful," I stated quite truthfully. "Satan," I whispered, "you poor old beast, if you are game, I am. It may kill us both, but we'll see it through." Satan shook his head, insulted at the liberty I took of addressing him confidentially.

We were now in the open country, which fairly sparkled in the clear October air. The vineyards on either side of the road were hung with purple clusters, the maples were giving the first hints of their autumn colouring; the sumach was already flaming. Beyond, the lake lay, a colder blue than I had seen it;

one felt like shouting with the very joy of living. All this, by some strange twist, reminded me of Mrs. Claybourne's hostility to me. I questioned Helen about it.

"Oh, mother made an awful fuss when she heard I'd asked you to come. Dad spoke up for you; at least, he told mother I was old enough to take care of myself. The trouble was that Ludwig had asked me to go with him—"

"That German?" I interrupted savagely.

"Hush, Ted. Remember your manners. I refused his invitation to ask you. Now are you satisfied?" Giving her horse a touch with her riding crop, she cantered off down the road ahead of me.

"Come Satan," I spoke to my animal, "shades of cattle round-ups and the Wyoming Trail—show what you are good for," and we set off madly in pursuit. It was her pleasure to let us catch her, for Satan, willing enough, was beyond the time of life when he could overhaul a thoroughbred. He was breathing hard, but with dignity, when I pulled upon his iron mouth as we came abreast. I found Helen laughing until tears were in her eyes.

"What now, little woman?" I asked with the anxiety a man has when a woman laughs by herself.

"I was thinking that if Satan were half a hand taller he would exactly match Mr. Winkle's horse. You looked too funny lumbering down the hill after us."

"Apart from the fact that it was bad form of you to canter down a hill and thus imperil Satan's rheumatic joints, I hope you don't intend the comparison to extend to the rider," I rebuked her.

"No," pursing her lips, "you handle a horse well—a little finicky, perhaps, as if you were riding in a park. All told, you compare quite favourably with Mr. Winkle"—this with a most merry twinkle.

"I was once in love with Arabella Allen," I remarked solemnly.

"Isn't that just like a man? She is better than some of the

impossible good-goody ones, though. Now, I'll bet, Ted, you thought David Copperfield's Agnes adorable?"

"She was my first love."

"Oh, men make me so angry!" she exclaimed fervently. "They put a silly doll on a pedestal and think that the pattern of what a woman should be."

"How old are you, Helen?"

"Eighteen, Ted."

"Therefore you are old enough to know what a man's woman should be."

"Ted, I hate sarcasm, especially from a boy, on the subject of women."

"I'm twenty-three; that's a lot older than you are."

"No, it isn't. A girl is always older than a boy, no matter what their ages."

That sounded illogical and complicated enough to be true. I didn't want, however, to surrender Agnes too easily.

"What ought a woman to be?" I followed up.

"A person of commonsense; not a silly, affected creature made in man's image—like Agnes."

"My truly first love was a fairy princess."

"A blonde, of course. Man again," and Helen replaced, I think unconsciously, a stray lock of most delicious brown hair.

"I was only nine years old."

"I told you a man's age never made any difference."

To this I had no satisfactory reply.

"I'm sorry, Ted. I didn't mean to be rude, or imply anything when I said that."

"I wasn't silent because you said that," I murmured. "I was just thinking how different Deep Harbor seems to me now."

"Were you very bored when you first came?"

"Perhaps," I said, "or lonely—I don't know which. Yes, I did find this a lonely place."

"It needn't have been. You could have met plenty of nice people, if you had taken a little trouble."

"It sounds frightfully foolish—in fact, I know it doesn't

sound remotely plausible—I didn't know there were any nice people here."

Helen's eyes were upon me in open astonishment, then she broke into one of her merry laughs.

"You thought you were marooned among barbarians, I suppose. How masculine and English, both together! The combination would be disastrous anywhere."

"I don't know," I protested. "I didn't get started, that's all. I had a lot to do out at the factory."

"Ted, don't lose your temper when you're teased. It's not good sporting spirit."

"I think I'm honest when I say I didn't think about meeting people at all. I wanted to get my work done as soon as possible and get away."

"I see. You were just camping in the wilderness," she laughed.

"Please don't."

"I know, Teddy boy, it's mean to tease you, but you do tease so easily. You don't suppose I would have asked you to go riding with me today, if I had not believed you were—well—nice, do you?"

And again she cantered away.

I let Satan take his time catching up. Helen's last words made me so happy I wanted to think it over. We were by now a long way ahead of the others; they were not even in sight. Moreover, it began to be a question with Satan and me how much longer we could hold the pace. Helen's instinct gave both Satan and me a respite. We found her resting by an oak overhanging the road.

"We must wait for the crowd to catch up with us," she waved to me. I rolled painfully off Satan's back, unloosed the girths, and allowed him to crop the roadside grass.

"Tie him to the fence," Helen suggested. Satan was promptly made fast to one of those picturesque barriers called locally a "snake-rail fence," a conglomeration of heavy split timbers piled one upon the other in alternate layers, each sec-

tion forming nearly a right angle with the adjacent one. Tawny golden-rod and purple asters stuck their tops through the fence rails, and many kinds of creeping vines, some already scarlet and yellow, helped bind the angles together. We stretched out on a little grassy bank facing the far distant lake, which lay about a mile away and a hundred feet or so below us. The flat vineyard-covered country sloped downward, away from us, to the lake shore.

"A pleasant open country;" I thought, as I relaxed my aching muscles.

"Wait until you see us after the first real frosts—when all the maples have turned," said Helen. It seemed natural and matter-of-course for her to read my thoughts.

"What a country to write a border ballad in," I exclaimed. "It's a pity nothing ever happened here."

Helen's militant patriotism was up in arms at once. "If that isn't like your conceited British ignorance! Over there, not far from that clump of trees by the lake, is a little block-house that has a story of pioneer heroism equal to—well, to the bravery at the siege of Lucknow, and not many miles from here the battle of Lake Erie was fought. Perhaps your English history books don't mention that fight," she flung at me mischievously.

"That is naturally wasted on me, because I'm not English," I answered.

"Well, you've lived there all your life and learned some of their ways. You are American only in streaks—and I've heard you call England 'home.' "

"That's true," I replied. "It seems curious to me sometimes—almost a man without a country. But when I said nothing had happened in this big place we are sitting in—it feels like sitting in the centre of a circle thousands of miles in diameter—I was thinking of one of our little English counties, Hertfordshire, for example, where, in any village you choose, you'll find half the world has happened. There's St. Albans—with the old Norman abbey church of Roman bricks sitting

high on the hill above the land on which Boadicea and her warriors held the legions at bay."

"Now I know you are a good American," she laughed.

"Why?"

"Because no Englishman is ever sentimental about England; it takes an American to be that."

She had undoubtedly scored a palpable hit. I dropped lecturing on English history.

"The others should be in sight by now," Helen said after a silence. I stood up and looked along the road. There was no trace of them to be seen.

"Perhaps it's because we turned off on to the Ridge Road; they've probably taken the shorter main road by the railroad tracks. I think we'd better ride on, Ted."

Satan, although partly refreshed, allowed me to mount with an ill grace; he gave a longing look backward whence we had come, and set forth after Helen's Titania, his head bowed in gloom. Sprinkled along the ridge, whose crest the road followed, were prosperous-looking farms. The villages and small towns clung closely to the railway which ran along the flat shelf between the ridge and the lake. The remarkable straightness and uniformity of the ridge indicated that it had itself at one time been the lakeshore in the days when even this great lake had been larger. After the close confinement to Deep Harbor it was glorious to ride in the open country with a road stretching indefinitely before one. I so far forgot my aches and pains as to burst into a popular music-hall song, to which Satan listened attentively through one ear turned backwards towards me. As I finished, Helen said: "I'm sorry I'm not musical, Ted, but I'm quite sure you have one of the worst voices I've ever heard." I was not mortified; my efforts at song always met with a like reception. Only extreme good spirits provoked me to melodious utterance. In general, I was careful to remember this particular limitation. I apologetically explained the reason for my peculiar behaviour. "It was partly the fact that we are rid of the

others for a time," I continued. "All things seem to make for good."

"You won't think so when you hear what Miss Hershey says about it."

"Miss Hershey?"

"Yes, the stout old maid on the white horse. She is a sort of professional chaperone for our crowd. The boys always draw lots before we go anywhere to see which one of them will be her escort. It is the loser who has that pleasure. Mother whispered many private instructions to her this morning."

"I shall make love to Miss Hershey at the first opportunity."

"It can't be done," laughed Helen. "It has been tried."

"You called her a professional chaperon—just what do you mean?"

"Just that. She is a social secretary, and all our mothers hire her to get up dances and to look after parties like ours today. She is dreadfully strict, naturally, since her bread and butter depends upon it."

"What an extraordinary business," I exclaimed. Here, indeed, was an inversion, so to speak of woman's oldest profession—a thought which could not be told to a débutante. "I've heard of Spanish duennas," I went on, "but I never knew you could go out into the market place and hire one at so much an hour."

"She's of a very fine old Southern family—"

"All Southern families are fine—and old," I interjected.

"Stop being irreverent to Miss Hershey, Ted. Her family being in reduced circumstances—"

"According to the regular formula—"

"Shut up, Ted. She came North and offered herself as a social secretary."

"You have made me all curiosity for luncheon."

"I'll give you one word of advice, Ted. You'd better be awfully nice to Miss Hershey or you won't go far in Deep Harbor. She and Mrs. Hemphill hold the power of life and death over all bachelors."

"What sort of things does one do to be nice to her?"

"Oh, talk to her about her family and tell her about your grandfather."

I laughed: "But my grandfather was in the Northern Army; ten to one he stole Miss Hershey's grandfather's spoons while marching through Georgia, or something like that."

"It doesn't matter. He was a colonel. And you're not very respectful to history. We don't laugh at the Civil War."

I acknowledged the rebuke. We rode for a mile or two in silence—a privilege which our friendship had already attained.

"There's the inn," Helen said, pointing down toward the plain on our left. About half a mile away I saw a group of white buildings gathered about the main road. A cross road took us to the front door. In the stable yard we saw the horses of the others already there—among them, Miss Hershey's white animal looming up with horrible distinctness. He looked positively symbolic. When we dismounted we found Miss Hershey awaiting us. The horse had not belied her; like it, she was broad and imposing across the withers. Her black-plumed riding hat suggested one of General Morgan's raiders.

"Helen, where have you been?" she began severely. Her Southern intonation added a doom-like sound to the interrogatory.

"We took the Ridge Road—it was pleasanter," Helen replied with an innocent calm which I envied her.

"At least, I should think that you, Edward, were old enough to have a sense of responsibility."

This sudden shift of the attack threw me into great confusion. Helen pinched my arm, I didn't know why. Evidently some defence was expected.

"I—I didn't know we had—er—lost you," I murmured, unconvincingly and ungallantly, as I suddenly realized, for it threw the onus upon Helen.

"Edward, you will ride with me going back." And Miss Hershey did something I had always wanted to see: she swept

into the inn. I had often read of people sweeping away from a situation and wondered how they did it. I was no longer in any doubt. It really was an effective exit. Helen laughed, most inappropriately, I thought.

"Ted, it's all right. You'll ride with me—if I want you to. And she called you 'Edward' twice. That's an awfully good sign—she's very particular about using Christian names—didn't you feel me pinch your arm when she said 'Edward'?"

The chicken dinner proved to be a wonderful affair. We were each served a whole grilled fowl together with corn on the cob and fried potatoes, followed by waffles and syrup, all on a lavish scale. The part of me which wasn't stiff and sore from riding was intensely hungry; I ate, careless of Satan's feelings. The only blot upon the meal was the fact that Herr Lieutenant von Oberhausen most excitedly explained America to all of us, calling upon me to translate when his scraps of English failed him. He talked himself into several word jams from which it was difficult for my knowledge of German to extricate him. He proved thoroughly to his own satisfaction the standardized Teutonic thesis that America is basely commercial, material, and totally lacking in ideals. When he got partly through and paused for a breathing space—speaking German oratorically is one of the most violent forms of physical exercise on earth, particularly destructive of throat tissues—I mildly remarked, in opposition, that I thought Berlin rather careful, to use the Scot's phrase, how a mark was spent, and skilfully inventive in discovering devices to earn those coins, considering that all Germany was composed of unmaterial, abstract idealists. The Herr Lieutenant did not understand the comment and asked for its repetition. I stripped the statement of its Anglo-Saxon irony and repeated it in bald German, containing one mistaken gender and a faulty termination. The Herr Lieutenant politely announced: "Es ist nicht wahr," and there we let the matter rest.

After dinner he buttonholed me on the front porch. My heart sank, for I supposed I was in for another lecture. On the contrary, he was now in an amiable mood and wished to go

in for reminiscences on the pleasures of eating in Berlin. He had not had anything one could really call food in America, except at a few German houses. As for the unspeakable American custom of not serving wine, guttural explosions were inadequate to express his feelings. How could one eat so in cold blood? It was on a par with materialism; indeed, a demonstration of it. It was "ungemütlich, unbequem" and a lot of other disturbing epithets. I let him ramble on, for I had learned long ago the futility of argument with his kind. Helen rescued me just as we had reached Kempinski's roast partridge on toast garnished with sauerkraut. It was just as well she did, for I was about to say that only idealists would add sauerkraut to a delicately flavoured game bird.

"We are going up our ravine, Ted," she whispered. The Herr Lieutenant was rather red in the face as we left him without any particular ceremony.

"What have you done with Miss Hershey?"

"Oh, that's all right. I had a talk with her while Ludwig was relieving his feelings to you. She can see no objection, if we all keep together going home."

Poor Satan had to have his saddle on once more. I did what I could for him, rubbing his back briskly first and inspecting his feet. There was no gratitude in his eye. We picked our way carefully up the bed of a small, densely wooded ravine, over red sandstone shale through which shallow water rippled; here and there the stream broadened out into mirror-smooth pools. Ferns and other sweet-smelling growing things lined the sides. Apparently we were in a primitive wilderness miles from any inhabitants. Splendid oaks and chestnuts shut out the direct rays of the sun, and we rode in a cool, green twilight such as one might find in the forest of Arden itself. The glory of this country is in its woodlands, I thought. Such a ravine as this would make a fortune for any railway in North Wales. Here it was one of thousands, nay millions, unsought save by an occasional wanderer—simply a part of the landscape. At last the ravine stopped abruptly against a sandstone barrier over which the little stream fell lazily and mistily. We dis-

mounted, and the horses shoved their noses eagerly through the cool water, as we lay on the mossy bank and stared at a patch of blue sky through the overhanging branches. The place had been made to order for sentimental young people.

"If this place were in Herr Ludwig's Harz Mountains or Black Forest," I said, "there would be a little restaurant behind us, surrounded by white pebbles, and a sign pointing at this ravine labelled 'Wald Idyll.' "

Helen laughed: "It must be rather convenient to have your emotions labelled for you."

"It is," I said, "when you are full of food and thinking is painful. You have only to read the signs, such as 'Schöne Aussicht' or 'Rauchen verboten,' and choose pleasure or anger at will."

"Ludwig must have been very annoying."

"He was; it's lucky you didn't understand all he said. He says we are base materialists," and I slapped a mosquito.

"It does irritate, the way Ludwig puts it, of course; the mere sound of his language makes one want to fight. But I wonder if some of it isn't true? How big a part do spiritual things play in your life, Ted?"

I sat up straight at the abruptness of the challenge. It was not an easy one to meet with Helen's now solemn grey eyes upon me. They were so large and clearly truthful. I was curious concerning my own answer.

"Spirituality is not what one does, such as going to church; it is the way one feels inside about things," I defended, I fear lamely. It wasn't what I had intended the major premise to be.

"Well," Helen went on, "how do you feel inside, and how much do these feelings shape your life?"

I was fairly cornered. I had postponed self-analysis on this particular subject; I wasn't certain what, if anything, I did believe. I lacked a good deal of Prospero's fluent "philosophy."

"Perhaps I could answer better if I knew a little about your opinions," I dodged.

"That isn't fair, because I asked first; however, I'm not

afraid to tell you." She pulled a fern leaf and slowly tore the fronds apart as she reflected a moment. I laughed.

"What are you laughing at, Ted?"

"Seeing you tear that fern apart made me think of *Caliban upon Setebos*—the twenty-first crab you choose for destruction, while you're trying to invent what you believe."

She flung the fern leaf from her horrified.

"Ted! That's true! How could you say it?"

"Because, Helen dear, I think we'll have to find things out for ourselves as we go through life; I for one can't take them ready made."

She leaned forward, her chin in her hands, her elbows resting on her drawn-up knees.

"Yes—I was hashing over in my mind to give you as something original only the things I'd already heard—"

"That is my objection to philosophy—it is a hash of words," I said.

"Still, one does have to have an experimental creed to go on with—one to change and add to, but to keep one steadfast meanwhile."

"Yes," I said. "Mine is foolishly practical: be decent, play fair, and take the life of no living creature."

"You are inconsistent right at the start," she complained. "If you lived up to your creed you'd be a vegetarian."

"I admit the weakness in the armour, but I mean shooting and killing beasts and birds for the fun of it. Mosquitoes are excepted."

"You keep your creed pretty firmly on earth."

"That's where I live at present, Grey Eyes."

"Ted, dear, I don't think you have improved upon the Sermon on the Mount, not even for practical purposes."

"I think, Helen, you've rather shown me up," I acknowledged. Her hand quickly sought my arm.

"No, Ted dear. I wasn't trying to outargue you; I wanted to know what you really thought about things."

"I improvised my creed on the spur of the moment. Probably there is more to it."

She got to her feet with her precious radiant laugh: "We must go back to the Inn, Ted. Miss Hershey will be fuming because the party can't start for home without us."

It was strange how naturally and unconsciously we had grown in intimacy and friendship during the day, leaping over what I had always imagined would take months of time. Yet I am quite certain, as I look backward now over the entries in my diary, that no serious thoughts of love had yet entered our heads. We were building away at a friendship, uncertain as to how elaborate the superstructure was to be, or, to be more precise, not questioning the future at all. To change the figure, we were quite content to explore one another's souls and to marvel at the mystic things we found there. Neither of us had quite reached complete frankness, but we were very near. I fell asleep that night with the realization that Deep Harbor had suddenly become an intimate place in which I lived.

CHAPTER SEVEN

I HAVE THE FIRST GREAT ADVENTURE

OKTOBER turned into November and angry hints of on-coming winter almost daily shrilled across the lake, scattering the heaps of yellow leaves on Myrtle Boulevard or playing the dickens with signs and hats on State Street. The nights were raw and cold; the night-shift at the factory ate their midnight lunches in the boiler room, a place which in July had seemed one of the lowest circles of the Inferno. Business was at a most critical stage, and Knowlton drove away at it day and night. We were, as he expressed it, just at the turn of the tide; it was a toss-up whether we should be swept on to the rocks or out into the sea of reasonable prosperity. I saw comparatively little of him, for he had not yet released me from night duty. I was getting quite accustomed to this nocturnal existence; I had actually grown to like it, because it left my afternoons free to go riding with Helen. I went to bed about half past seven in the morning, got up around three, and three-thirty would find Helen and me trotting sedately up Myrtle Boulevard—a sight to which the latter had become so hardened that not a verandah fluttered as we passed by. Indeed, the cool weather had driven even the most hardened gossip-scouts within. Helen's girl friends had tacitly accepted the situation, and at dinners or card parties Helen and I were always paired off together by tactful hostesses. None of the first riding party went with us now. Miss Hershey was chaperoning at White Sulphur, although there were rumours she would return for Christmas. "Mother" was querulous and fretful, particularly when we rode on stormy days; otherwise she had practically ceased active opposition. Her attitude now was resigned, if hurt, patience, varied with occasional Cassandra-like utterances of dire foreboding.

Saturdays were now thrice blessed, for the factory shut down from six o'clock Saturday evening until midnight Sunday, leaving the whole of Saturday free for me, if I kept Sunday for sleeping. We therefore reserved Saturdays for our longer expeditions into the rolling hill country behind us. (In the geography of Deep Harbor "the front" was the lake.) Soon hard frosts would come to make the roads impassable; we strove to do all the exploring possible before that should happen. I had found another horse which a modest weekly payment reserved for my exclusive use. He was a small Western pony, young and hard as nails. On frosty days he often tried to climb into the upper air, but he was to be preferred to the misanthropic Satan, who had fallen to the sad fate of hauling a grocer's wagon. Nevertheless Helen and I retained a warm spot in our hearts for old Satan and often carried him apples and sugar. In a large measure we owed him our friendship. It was an undeserved misfortune that it had come too late in life for Satan to keep up with. Helen named the new pony Starbright, because of the white star in the centre of his dark chestnut forehead. We both agreed that the name revealed no great powers of originality.

On the second Saturday in November we planned one of our longest quests. We both regretfully admitted it would probably be the last until spring; either snow or frozen ground was due at any time. The day was gusty and overcast; "Mother" tried every whine in her repertoire to dissuade us from going. Helen's obstinacy refused to yield, and off we went, taking our luncheons with us. On a hillside, by the edge of the wood, several miles away, we dismounted and built a camp fire against a large boulder. Helen endeavoured to instruct me in the art of camp cooking, a skill which she maintained she had learned one summer in the woods. It consisted principally of trying to balance a flimsy piece of bacon on a forked stick. The instant the heat reached the meat it would curl up and fall into the redhot coals. It then became my duty to burn my fingers in an attempt at rescue before the bacon turned to a cinder. In this way we spoiled a fair amount

by the time we had each eaten two or three scorched slices. I commented on the fact that camp cooking seemed uneconomical, to say nothing of its lack of finesse. Helen laughingly guessed she was "out of practice," so we toasted marshmallows instead, a form of cooking in which we were more proficient. The warmth of the fire was pleasant, and we lingered on, careless of our original purpose to penetrate far into the hills. It was Helen's turn to tell me of herself, which she did, half shyly, half whimsically.

The eighteen years of her life had been passed in Deep Harbor, except for two winters at a large New England boarding-school, or during brief visits to school friends in New York. At school she had had the good fortune to come under the influence of a rare kind of teacher—one with the power of revealing the world. Helen spoke of her with dreamy affection, as of one who had opened a gate and shown the beauty of an unsuspected garden lying beyond. Having shown it, she had left Helen to wander in it at will. Thus it came about that this young girl, native of a provincial town, had found the path leading to citizenship of the world. The maturity of her judgment was astonishing; it implied an experience of life which I knew was impossible. I often found myself deferring to her opinion or leaning upon her advice, for her calm, level decisions brushed aside my cobwebs of sentiment and substituted truth for the meshes of whim or impulse. Day by day I had grown more dependent upon her until I expressed no opinion, even concerning business, without first submitting it for her approval. With all this she was a fun-loving child, full of mischief and humour, or occasionally tempest-swept by sudden child-like anger, when the storm clouds in her eyes would frighten me. After anger would follow such a melting tenderness as made me long to kneel at her feet and beg forgiveness for having caused her displeasure.

Curiously enough we neither of us analyzed what was happening to us. It seemed natural that we preferred to be together—even to be alone—and we were content with the word "friendship" as a complete explanation. Neither of us ques-

tioned it or looked beyond our next Saturday together. We must have been very young and inexperienced. Once in a while Knowlton had asked me, with his Harlequin's grin, how I was getting on; old Hemphill at the factory had stumbled his way through a clumsy joke aimed at me: neither followed the subject very far. Helen was not a topic I would allow discussed; there was something so far beyond the comprehension of the world in our attitude toward each other. Helen's own friends, I discovered, had passed from teasing to regard us as a *fait accompli*, and thereafter held their peace. Here again we looked upon their behaviour as simply caused by their lack of understanding. Poor old world, how we pitied it!

Today we were playing one of our new games—I don't know which of us thought of it first. The game was founded upon the *Morte d'Arthur*, and we were in search of the questing beast. Helen stretched comfortably before the camp fire and read aloud to me from her Mallory, which I carried in my coat pocket, the description of this mediaeval animal. As she finished we listened for the noise to come from the woodland on the edge of the hillside pasture in which we were. It sounds ridiculous to tell of it now, but it was as real to us as the play of children is to them. Beyond the edge of the wood there lay strange adventures—we had no doubt of it. Deep Harbor faded from us like a conjurer's vision, and the fields, hills and woods became the enchanted reality. We peopled it with all the crew of fairy folk and ourselves assumed rôles appropriate to our fellowship. How could ordinary Deep Harborites understand such a game or dream that this was one of the secrets of our friendship—they who thought only of such mundane things as love and marriage? Would they not laugh at the Lady Grey Eyes on her cream-coloured palfrey, escorted by her trusty knight, Edward of Over-Seas? To be sure the Lady Helen's horse was light chestnut, not cream, but in her magic capacity the mare assumed a new tint.

As we scanned the woodland, wondering what castle it hid or whether a hermit dwelt in its shade, we were aware of a tawny yellow animal approaching us. By his manner it should have

been a dog, but the peculiarity of its build and complexion left some doubt. On the other hand, he was not the questing beast, for his coming was silent. Helen clung to me with delight; the creature was unusual enough, seen through our imagination, to look like the bearer of adventure. Carefully he circled us with an upstanding waving yellow signal of friendly purpose. I whistled. It awoke a sympathetic response, for he bounded up to us and laid his head in the Lady Grey Eyes' lap in token of obeisance. Dog there was no denying he was, but one whose ancestors had mingled with strange company. Chief among his forebears had been a bull dog; the others had been of that cadmium-hued race to be found sleeping in the dust of village streets. From ear to ear of his square bulldog head there spread an expansive smile, whence depended a most liquid tongue. He kissed my hand, thus completing his homage.

"Ted, I want him. He's mine!" the Lady Grey Eyes declared.

"On my honour as a knight, you shall have him, if no farmer catches us in the theft, or if he does, we'll try what filthy lucre will accomplish," I replied, somewhat diverging from the purity of Mallory's style. I made fast the prize with a piece of string. There seemed no need, for he accepted gratefully whatever command we laid upon him.

"What name shall our new companion bear?" I asked. Helen regarded her treasure trove critically. In spite of the misalliance of one of his ancestors, our friend was unquestionably mainly plebeian except for the sternness of his tenacious profile. The latter gave him an air unlike any other dog. His amiability, however, was unquenchable.

"He ought to be called 'Bill' if it wasn't for his face," mused Helen. "What do you say to 'Sir Leonidas de la Patte Jaune'?"

"It strikes me as a bit beyond his linguistic ability; however, just as you say."

"He is lion-coloured—hence 'Leonidas.' " she explained—I

had some doubts concerning this etymology—"and yellow paws are undoubtedly characteristic of the majority of his family." I nodded, for her latter argument was flawless.

"What shall we call him for short?" The practical world would assert itself at times.

"Leonidas, of course," said Helen with dignity. "The rest of his name is part of our secret."

I sprang to my feet. "The questing beast!" I exclaimed. "Let's test Sir Leonidas on an adventure. Let him track the questing beast through the forest!"

Helen gave a little cry of joy, her eyes shining.

"Come, Sir Leonidas de la Patte Jaune!" she called. We are about to lay a high adventure upon thee!" Leonidas tilted his head, listening to her, and wagged his tail at varying speeds. "Over there in yonder woods is a marvellous questing beast which we have taken an oath to bring to Arthur's Court ere a year and a day have passed. Thou shalt aid us in the quest. It is only fair to warn thee that this task is fraught with dire peril, but thy cheerful soul shall carry thee safely through all. Sir Edward of Over-Seas and I, the Lady Grey Eyes, shall be ever at thy side." She untied the string.

"Go get him! Sic 'em!" I said. Which of us he understood the better, I do not know. At any rate he was off at a bound toward the woods, and Helen followed with speed afoot.

Back and forth we ranged through dense underbrush, Leonidas making noise enough, as he crashed over dry twigs, to frighten away a menagerie of wild animals. Helen shouted with laughter at his clumsy eagerness to serve us. We worked our way into a clearing, and here Leonidas' excitement redoubled. This time he was clearly on the track of something. Helen was just a trifle nervous at the change from make-believe.

"What may one expect in these woods?" I asked.

"Nothing but woodchucks and rabbits, unless—" and she gave a scream that startled me. "Call him quick, Ted, quick!"

she implored. What unknown danger were we walking into? I wondered, but I called Leonidas, and none too soon. There emerged from a thicket a small black and white animal.

“Run—run for your life, Ted!” The tone of her voice brought instant obedience. We fled in miserable panic back to our pasture, followed, luckily, by Leonidas. As we reached the remains of our camp fire, Helen sank exhausted with laughter, great tears streaming down her cheeks.

“Ted, it was a skunk,” she gasped, much as Mrs. Siddons must have spoken a famous line of Lady Macbeth’s. Leonidas lay panting, his nose between his paws. I wiped the sweat of exertion and relief from my forehead.

“That’s the worst of adventures,” I said, after a pause. “The stories never mention the unpleasant odour one is apt to encounter by the way.”

“Ted, that’s the narrowest escape we ever had. What would mother have said?” and she rocked again with laughter.

“My immediate concern would not have been ‘mother,’ if anything had happened,” I commented reflectively. “Leonidas,” and I turned to him, “I hope you have learned the lesson of never overplaying your hand. We sent you on one adventure, and you got us into one not on the orthodox list.” Leonidas cocked one eye at me and feebly wagged his tail.

“Ted, those bushes have made my hair a sight,” Helen said, and without more ado, tumbled it all down on her shoulders. Something caught my throat; I had never seen her with her hair down, and the added beauty it gave her almost hurt. I sat silent and motionless, staring at her while she combed it out as if she were doing the most ordinary thing in the world.

“Don’t put it up—just yet,” and I made a slight gesture to stop her, as she began to twist it into a mass.

“Why not, Ted? It’s untidy enough as it is,” and her grey eyes opened wide at me. I couldn’t explain.

“Please leave it.”

“Silly boy, if you want me to,” she laughed, and tossed it back with a shake of her head.

"May I touch it?" I begged, stretching forth my hand. Instinctively she drew away slightly.

"I don't know, Ted," and we looked at each other a long minute.

"Please," I coaxed. She hesitated and then she began to do it up.

"I don't think you'd better," she said so low I could scarcely hear her. "It isn't like us, Ted." That answer was so final that I did not dream of questioning it.

"I'm sorry I asked—forgive me, Helen dear," and I got up to gather sticks with which to revive our fire. Leonidas remained on guard by Helen's side. While I was away I led the horses over to a pond at the foot of the hill and watered them. Upon my return Helen was looking her imperturbable neat self. We read the Mallory together before the fire until the sinking November sun warned us to go. The problem arose: would Leonidas follow our horses? He could not be led on a leash, and without Leonidas Helen refused to return. Experiment was necessary; to our joy Leonidas remained indifferent whether we rode or walked afoot. He was content to follow either way. With some trepidation we picked our way by the first farm-house we passed, expecting either to be challenged to surrender the dog or else to see Leonidas dash home; neither of these things happened. It was impossible to canvass the countryside, house by house, looking for his owner—at least, I thus stifled Helen's conscience on this point, for, faced with the necessity of carrying him off, she suddenly felt we ought to pay for him. Leonidas simply came.

The air grew chillier and chillier; Helen started off on a brisk canter to warm us up. Along a soft dirt road we went at a good clip, Leonidas trailing desperately in the rear. We were on the crest of a hill overlooking distant Deep Harbor and the lake. The soft coal smoke lay black over the town, blending with the lighter greys of the water and sky. All outlines were blurred and softened in the half light, and Deep Harbor might have been a city of dreams. Ahead of me, Helen must

have been thinking something the same, for she pointed toward it with a sweeping gesture of her arm.

As she did so her horse caught a loose stone, stumbled, and fell. I had one glimpse of her lying motionless in the road, after her horse scrambled up and dashed on, riderless; the next I knew, I was at her side, my own horse abandoned, holding her tightly in my arms.

I was dazed with the suddenness of it all; for a moment I could not think and did nothing but hug her close, her head against my shoulder, as I bent over her face and whispered, "Helen, dear! Helen!" over and over again.

At last she opened her eyes of her own accord, for I had taken no rational steps to aid her, and smiled at me. I held her still more closely, delirious with joy; her eyes grew serious as she looked back at me, until they melted into the tenderest grey any man has ever seen. Then we both understood; there was no need of further words; her hand sought mine and rested there with quiet confidence.

"It's my knee, Ted. I've wrenched it," she whispered. "I must have fainted—that wasn't like me, Teddy dear, was it?" Again she smiled such a happy little smile that actually a tear from my eyes fell upon her cheek.

I laid her gently down, roused to some vague trace of commonsense. "I'll get some water," I said, looking helplessly around at an arid country road.

"It's much more important, Ted, to catch the horses." There was truth in this. Mine was quietly cropping grass a few yards away; Helen's was doing the same about a hundred yards further on. Leonidas joined us, evidently in deep concern. It was a simple matter to catch my horse, for he had been trained to come at command. Helen refused again to let me help her until I had made a try for her animal. I mounted and rode cautiously up to the mare; she gave a toss of her head and was off for a few yards further. We repeated this several times with the same results. Next I dismounted and advanced with elaborate flattery. Useless; the beast

would not allow herself to be caught. I was in despair, imagining Helen to be suffering pain which somehow my presence might alleviate, while this confounded horse was taking me straight away. Apparently, however, the horse tired of the game after a few more minutes, or else her feminine nature desired to assert itself in a new way; as I was about to give it up as a bad job she unexpectedly permitted me to walk right up to her and seize the bridle. Needless to say, the three of us were not long in returning to Helen.

She was sitting up with one foot straight out in front of her, Leonidas proudly beside her. "I can stand on it, Ted," she called out, "but riding is out of the question." It was rapidly growing dark, and we were several miles from home. The roads we chose for riding were the unfrequented by-ways; it seemed unlikely, therefore, that there was much hope of anything passing. Also it was cold. These things we ruefully enumerated to each other.

"Do you feel much pain?" I asked when we had exhausted the list of other disadvantages in the situation. We both avoided reference to what we knew had happened when she first opened her eyes in my arms.

"It hurts only if I bend it. I don't dare take my riding boot off for fear I couldn't get it on again. It's only a twist—nothing broken, or I couldn't stand. Isn't it ridiculous, Ted?" and she laughed.

"I don't want to leave you here alone—in the dark—while I get help, dearest—and yet I don't see what else to do."

"Indeed, you won't leave me alone, Ted, if I stay here all night. We'll just wait. Perhaps I'll be able to walk after a little rest."

"There ought to be a farm near by—I could telephone from there—"

"You'll sit right here with me, dear," she said with finality. "This whole country is full of tramps—they're all making for the big cities at this time of the year."

I knew this to be true; they were to be seen everywhere. Deep Harbor's freight yards were a kind of clearing house for

tramps stealing rides east and west. They camped, by night, for miles about the town. The mere thought of them made me sit promptly by Helen's side. We sat for a long time in silence.

"It is true, Ted, isn't it?" she said.

"Yes."

"And to think we never guessed it!"

"Not until I saw you lying in the road," I said with a slight catch in my voice, as the picture flashed through my mind again. Her warm, womanly hand crept into mine, and once more there was silence. We were both too overwhelmed with this new miracle to talk about it. I could not see her face, for the night was too dark. I don't think it occurred to either of us that we had not as yet exchanged a lovers' kiss or even mentioned the word "love." We both wanted a little time to think about and feel our happiness. Leonidas curled up at our feet and slept. She reached down and stroked his head gently.

"You won't laugh at me for wanting to keep Sir Leonidas de la Patte Jaune now, will you, Ted dear?"

"No," I answered, smiling in spite of myself to think what strange forms the bearers of romance could take. Then came a different mood. The world was glowing, building beautiful fantastic shapes and sounds in my mind, in which there swirled black smoke from factory chimneys, grey eyes and flowing hair, the clatter of horses' hoofs, Helen's laugh, the ugly square face of a yellow dog—a tumbling, changing medley of sound and colour, half ecstatic, half terrible, for through it all darted again and again the vision of Helen lying still and motionless upon the road—an insistent bass accompaniment striving to drown the shriller, sweeter notes of joy. I could not speak. I tried to say something to Helen, to tell her something of what I felt, but I could only press her hand and hold it tight. "Here is the true beginning of life," my thoughts cried to me. "Remember that with the beginning of life also begins the end," rumbled that terrifying bass. Why—why should fear come to me on this day of all days? Was

it some ancient racial superstition of primitive man's that when the gods smiled then they plotted evil?—was it such a childish inherited instinct as this that had seized me? But dread would not shake off. "The Greeks believed great happiness to be dangerous; the mediaeval monks scourged it from their bodies; the Puritans cursed it," thundered that bass, crying down the "I love her" singing in my ears.

"If you will let me lean upon your shoulder, I think I can walk now," came Helen's gentle voice, bringing me with a start from the whirlpool of my thoughts. I stood up. "What were you thinking, Teddy?" she asked shyly as I stooped to help her to her feet.

"You know the *Tannhäuser* overture?" I whispered.

"Yes."

"Listen to it and you'll guess a little how my head sounds."

I put one arm around her and led the horses as best I could with my left hand. We made slow and painful progress down the road. Helen was as plucky as I knew she would be; although each step was agony, not a whimper came from her lips. About half a mile from where we started the light of a farm appeared; we staggered through the little swinging gate, arousing a pack of dogs which made more noise than the Seven Champions of Christendom. With difficulty we restrained Leonidas from going to a noble death in single combat against the lot. It took as heavy knocking as upon the gates of Macbeth's castle to arouse the farmer within, who finally opened the door a distrustful crack and stood surveying us by the light of a glass oil lamp held above his head. He was clad in rubber boots, trousers, and a night shirt; the expression upon his face did not indicate any anxiety to ask us to partake of bread and salt with him.

"Have you a telephone?" I asked. "This lady was thrown from her horse and hurt. I want to get help."

He reflectively turned all this over in his mind, evidently considering the request and its accompanying statement from all conceivable angles. Leonidas tactlessly growled at him and incurred severe reproof from Helen.

"Please let me in," she pleaded. "I want very much to sit down." I was meditating choking consent out of the impassive sour-faced old man. A high-pitched nasal voice called out from the head of the stairs: "Henery, don't you dast to give no tramps anything to eat."

"I'll pay you for your trouble," I said, producing a few bills.

"I reckon 'I don't have to be paid for no trouble,'" the old codger snarled. I saw that I had made another error of tact. "What you doing out gallivantin' around this time of night?" he added.

"We are not out from choice," I reminded him. "This lady has had an accident and is seriously hurt. All we ask is to be allowed to stay here until we get help from town."

"Mary!" he turned and shouted, "c'mon down here a minute." All this time he carefully guarded the door so that entrance was not possible. I had the intelligence at last to seat Helen on the porch steps while "Mary" made suitable toilet above stairs. The old woman came down in a red flannel mother Hubbard, from which stray ruffles of her nightgown protruded.

"What's all this foolishness about, Henry?" she inquired sharply.

"Young fellow and his girl—says she's hurt," Henry replied.

"Are they married?"

"Dunno. I don't take much stock in the story myself."

"If you'll allow me to explain—" I ventured, thinking it about time I took a hand in the dialogue.

"Tell them my name, Ted. Every one around here knows father," Helen suggested. Why had I not thought of this before?

"Miss Claybourne has had a fall from her horse and is hurt," I began.

"Martin Claybourne's girl?" the old woman interrupted.

"Yes."

"Lives on Myrtle Boulevard?"

"Yes."

"Henery, you old dumbhead, open that door and get a light in the parlour. Land sakes, men is fools. Bring the child right in here. Dear, dear, Martin Claybourne's little girl hurt and you standing there shutting the door in her face—how you expect to answer to your Maker on the great day, the Lord only knows. Where are you hurt, darling?" This to Helen as I almost carried her in and laid her on the best horse-hair sofa.

"I've only wrenched my knee, thank you," Helen smiled.

"I'll get you a hot poultice just as soon as I get a fire in the stove. We'll fix you all up while the men folks are telephoning. I do believe I've got a bottle of arnica up in the store closet," and she shooed "Henery" and me out of the room. I had the luck to get Mr. Claybourne on the telephone almost immediately, and partly explained to him the situation, as far as the accident was concerned, while "Henery" contributed directions where to reach us: "Tell him it's Five Mile Farm on South Ridge—Henery Tyler's place." This done, "Henery" assisted me to put the horses in the barn and to make Leonidas fast to a post. I was now anxious to return to Helen, but "Henery" put obstacles in the way: "Better leave the women-folk alone—pertickly as you ain't married, till Mary gets that poultice fixed." I brushed his objections aside and went into the parlour. Mrs. Tyler let out a piercing shriek, for poor Helen's bare and badly swollen knee was exposed to view. Helen laughed: "It's all right, Mrs. Tyler—Ted and I—well, I want him to help."

"Land sakes!" exclaimed Mrs. Tyler, "I remember you in short dresses—seems like it was only yesterday, walkin' down Myrtle Boulevard with your dad—and do you mean to say you and him—?"

"Yes," Helen said with a dear look at me, covering her knee shyly. I rushed to her side, seizing the arnica bottle to disguise my confusion.

"My, my, how time flies!" Mrs. Tyler continued, moralizing the spectacle from beneath her curl papers. "Why, you

ain't no more'n a child. How long you been keepin' company?"

"Not very long," Helen replied, her hand in mine. "You won't let that poultice burn, will you, Mrs. Tyler?"

"Land sakes, no! Clean forgot all about it. To think that numbskull Henery tried to shut the door in your face, and the minister preachin' about the good Samaritan only last Sunday—" and she mercifully departed in search of the poultice. We could hear her in the kitchen giving "Henery" an additional "piece of her mind," as she would have called it.

"Why didn't you tell me at first that you knew these people, sweetheart?" I asked. "It would have saved you some of the pain of standing." I tried to be reproachful.

Helen giggled happily. "I wanted to see if you could manage it, Ted. It was too delicious to watch you lose your temper on my account because you went at 'Henery' Tyler the wrong way. I'll never again send you as ambassador to one of our farmers. You even offered him money!" and she laughed. I felt there was a defence to my actions, but could think of none.

"Now, Ted, do you think we ought to leave my knee alone until we see a doctor, or shall we try the arnica and Mrs. Tyler's poultice?"

"I don't know," I said. "I hate to experiment with a knee without expert advice, but I don't believe arnica will do any harm, and the poultice will be warming."

Helen promptly displayed her knee again, and I gingerly applied the arnica. Mrs. Tyler returned with a steaming poultice.

"Now, dearie, you must have it on just as hot as you can stand it," she said, making a great bustle of preparation.

"Feel it, Ted, and see if I can stand it. I don't want to be blistered," Helen whispered. I seized the poultice as Mrs. Tyler held it in mid-air ready to apply it violently. I gave an involuntary "Ouch!" it was so hot. Mrs. Tyler refused to yield without a struggle.

"It's what I always do for Henery's rheumatics—catches him in the back when he's splittin' wood for the kitchen stove.

Once I give him a good hot poultice he never complains of his back again that season." Poor man, with such a dire penalty instantly exacted, who would commit a second offence? Under further protests I got the poultice sufficiently cool, and I bound it in place with quite a workmanlike-looking bandage. When all had been put to rights as well as it could be, "Henery" was admitted. He bore a tray of biscuits, a pitcher of milk, and pie. Both Helen and I recalled with a laugh that we hadn't thought of food since our campfire of the early afternoon.

"We can't eat in the parlour," said the tactful Helen, aware of how great an enormity this must seem to a farmer's wife.

"Now, dearie, don't you fret yourself. You ain't agoin' to stir, not if I can help it. I guess the parlour can put up with it for once, if a certain long-faced fool will wipe his feet before he comes trapesin' in." The latter part of this remark was directed at "Henery" who promptly retreated and was heard vigorously scraping in the passage.

"I don't suppose you have any spirits—whisky, for instance? I think a drink would do Miss Claybourne good after the shock she's had." I noticed Helen's eyes dance as I said this, and she leaned forward eagerly to hear the reply.

"Spirits!" gasped Mrs. Tyler. "You mean rum?"

"Well," I said, "rum will do, if it's all you have." Helen made a mysterious and unaccountable noise—something like a choke.

"Praise the Lord, there ain't no liquor ever passed my lips—let 'lone my threshold!" she ejaculated. "Henery" stuck his head in at the door: "I've got a little somethin' I keep for my backache up in the hayloft," he ventured timorously. "If Miss Helen needs a little for medicinal purposes, same as I do occasionally, she's welcome," and he disappeared rather hastily. "There goes an example of true courage," I thought, "for it's ten to one he's sacrificing the future as well as the present." The look on Mrs. Tyler's face was awe-inspiring; her lips closed in a firm, tight line and no sound came from them. Under all the circumstances, however, I didn't envy "Henery." Helen and I did not dare exchange glances; she

hurriedly nibbled a biscuit, and I studied a cabinet full of polished sea-shells. Mrs. Tyler suddenly left the room like a shot from a gun. I turned and went to Helen. She put her arms around my neck and kissed me.

"You dear, dear Ted," she laughed. "I'm going to have such fun watching you put your foot in it all your life!"

"But—but—" I sputtered.

"Yes, darling, I know. You did it for me and with the best intentions. That will always be your reason, you delicious thing."

"You know—that was our first kiss," I said with an abrupt change of subject.

"Oh, Ted, and I had to kiss you first after all!"

"I seem to flub everything," I remarked, unaccountably nettled. Helen laughed: "If I didn't love you so, Ted, I'd shake you. There now! I've said 'I love you' first, too."

"Henery" entered with a familiar looking bottle, closely followed by Mrs. Tyler.

"There ain't more'n a thimbleful left," he apologized holding it to the light. "My back's been kind of bad during the damp spell."

"Henery Tyler, it ain't rained a mite for six weeks," Mrs. Tyler snapped. I took the bottle from "Henery" and smelt the contents; it was a cheap whisky.

"Will you take a little, Helen?" I asked. "Just to pull you together."

"I don't think I need it, Ted, unless you tell me to take it." I started to hand it back to "Henery," but Mrs. Tyler was too quick for me. She snatched the bottle: "I'll just lock this away in the medicine closet, and when Henery's back troubles him again, he can have it along with one of my hot poultices."

"Henery" looked truly woeful; it was an awful price to ask a man to pay for a drink. As Helen finished the biscuit and milk we heard a carriage outside, and Mr. Claybourne came rushing in. He was greatly relieved at seeing Helen about to eat a large slice of apple pie instead of lying crippled, as he evidently expected.

"Well, Ted, what have you been doing to my little girl?" he asked, kissing Helen and shaking hands with me all in one move.

"It wasn't *all* Ted's fault," Helen smiled, her eyes shining. But Mr. Claybourne was too relieved and excited to notice anything.

"I'll arrange the cushions in the carriage, and you and I will carry her out, Ted," he shouted and dashed out again. Helen beckoned me to her.

"Don't say anything tonight, dear," she whispered. "I'm too tired to face mother. Come to Sunday dinner tomorrow," and she hugged my hand against her shoulder. "Let it be another of our secrets until then." I bent over her and kissed her hair. The Tylers were discreetly busy.

"Ted, dear?"

"Yes?"

"I'm so glad I hurt my knee!"

Mr. Claybourne appeared at the door.

"The carriage is ready, Ted. You'll have to take the horses in by yourself. Help me to carry the patient. I couldn't get Dr. Sinclair, but he'll be waiting for us at the house when we get back." We gathered Helen up between us and carried her out.

"You'll look after Leonidas too, won't you, Ted?" she said. "My knee will be enough for mother for one day."

The carriage drove away with Mr. Claybourne still shouting his thanks at the Tylers, with an "If I can do anything for you, Henry, look in at my office Monday." As "Henery" and I made our way to the barn to get Leonidas and the horses I said: "Mr. Tyler, if you will also stop at my office on Monday, you'll find a package of excellent medicine for rheumatism."

CHAPTER EIGHT

I PLAY A PART IN A MELODRAMA

REGARDLESS of all excitement of the day before, and of the change that had come into my life, I slept late Sunday morning. The reason was that, because of night duty at the factory, it was the first sleep for twenty-four hours. All the thinking and plans I had intended to do and make while in bed faded into a dreamless unconsciousness. I awoke without having decided on the best approach to Helen's family. Business was not yet in such shape that I could offer a strong financial argument to so keen a business man as Mr. Claybourne, nor had I any idea what my own family would think of me. Letters were not an ideal means of communication. Could I express in black and white how adorable Helen was—she who was all intangible charm and delight? These and many other disturbing thoughts came to me as I shaved. It was curious that every fresh step in life opened up such vistas of unforeseen problems! Nothing was as one had imagined it would be.

On my way out Myrtle Boulevard I passed a florist's—the florist shops kept open until church time in Deep Harbor—and bought Helen a bunch of Parma violets; they were her favourites, and to me violets symbolized her. She was sitting up, her foot on a rest and "Mother" hovering about, when I arrived. Helen reported the doctor's opinion as favourable—a bad wrench, but requiring merely rest and quiet. "Mother" was more pessimistic; with a knee one never knew what would happen; a friend of hers had a daughter no older than Helen who had been made lame for life by less; still, it was what she had always expected, only no one ever listened to her advice, least of all Helen; had she not warned her again and

again that horseback riding at all hours of the day and night was dangerous, to say nothing of being highly improper? Helen buried her nose in the violets and said nothing; I, too, had learned a measure of discretion where "mother" was concerned, and sat on the edge of my chair throughout the tirade. Mr. Claybourne rescued us.

"Now, mother," he said in his brisk way, "these kids want to talk it all over by themselves. You come into the library with me and read the scandal in the Sunday supplement. The best regulated horses will fall down sometimes; thank Heaven your daughter didn't break any bones, and be happy." He dragged her protesting away. Helen and I looked at one another, uncertain where to begin.

"It was like you, Ted, to bring me the violets, but you mustn't waste money on me any more. We'll need it all," she smiled—womanlike, recovering first. "Have we any money, Ted?"

I was hardly prepared for so direct a poser; yet even Arthur's knights sometimes had difficulties financing their quests. It was distinctly her right to know the truth.

"My present salary isn't enough," I admitted, "but by next summer, if the business is well on its feet, we can go to England. I have an interest in the factory given me by my father. It's up to Knowlton to make that good."

"England!" she dreamed. "I'll love it, Ted! It'll be hard to leave my father, though. Dear old dad adores me."

"I'm not surprised," I said, taking her slender white hand to my lips.

"You mustn't tease, Ted. I'm serious today. Why didn't you bring me Leonidas?" It was, of course, useless to object to Helen's categories of "serious things."

"I thought best to try 'mother' with one thing at a time. Leonidas is chewing a slipper under my study table. In the bathroom he will find a bowl of bread and milk at his convenience."

Helen laughed: "I hope you'll take as good care of me, Ted." The maid announced dinner; Mr. Claybourne, with

my assistance, carried Helen to the dining room, and we made great to-do of propping her up with cushions. Helen sent me back to the living room for her violets; they had to be at a certain spot on the table in front of her. I observed Mr. Claybourne pause for a second in the midst of his soup to watch Helen and her flowers; she kissed them when I put the bunch in front of her, which caused Mr. Claybourne to resume eating with some show of violence. "Mother" did not notice this by-play; she was scolding the maid because the soup was too hot and hadn't enough salt, and there was a draft somewhere that was bringing in all the kitchen smells, though for the life of me I couldn't detect any. The maid having been properly flustered and needlessly irritated, "Mother" turned with a sigh toward Helen.

"Ludwig hasn't sent you any flowers for a long time; I used to love those American beauties—where did he get them, Rosenstein's, wasn't it?"

I looked slyly at Helen, who blushed charmingly and became much interested in her plate. Mr. Claybourne gave a loud laugh.

"Mother, I think you scored a bull's eye that time!" he roared, in great enjoyment of his own joke.

"What have I said now?" "Mother" asked in her plaintive way, looking from one to another of us. "I should think I might be allowed to make a remark once in a while. I don't expect any one to talk to me or pay any attention to me, but I do claim the privilege of an occasional word in my own house."

Helen's low "Mother dear" was cut short by hearty Mr. Claybourne.

"Now, Lucy, don't go up in the air. No one was laughing at you; on the contrary, Ted's face was solemn as a judge's—and he winked elaborately at me. By way of retort Mrs. Claybourne burst into tears and left the table. Mr. Claybourne, with a distinctly muttered "Damn" followed her at a decent interval.

"I'm sorry, Ted," said Helen, in defiance of the maid, put-

ting her hand on mine. "Never let me become so spoiled, will you, dear?"

"As if you could!" I said, leaning toward her.

"The worst of it is," Helen continued, "poor mother really believes that she is a much neglected and abused woman, whereas dad does everything on earth to please and humour her. If only he would try firmness once! And she would be so much happier, too, instead of imagining herself the victim of 'nerves,' as she calls it."

"I'm not sure dispositions are curable."

Mr. Claybourne returned: "Go on with dinner, children; mother will be down in a few minutes. I'm afraid she has a sick headache; the shock of last night," he explained.

"Dear dad," Helen smiled.

"What are you dear dadding me for?" her father inquired, as he sharpened the carving knife.

"I shan't tell you, if you can't guess."

"Not another hat—or more pocket money?" he said seriously.

"No, father, of course not!"

He shook his head and concentrated on carving a pair of ducks. In due time "Mother" returned, red-eyed and resigned. She sat at table and refused all food, although both Mr. Claybourne and I danced about the room urging this and that upon her.

"I know what you need to cheer you up, old girl," shouted Mr. Claybourne with hilarity that began to sound a little forced, "a bottle of champagne"!

Mother protested that her head felt bad enough now; it was absurd extravagance and set a bad example in the kitchen, to say nothing of champagne on Sunday being a sacrilege: her husband pooh-poohed it all, and went down cellar after a bottle.

"Here, Ted! you open it," handing me a flagon of the widow Clicquot's special brew upon his re-entry. "I'll get the glasses."

"We have a waitress, Martin," was "Mother's" final protest.

With much coaxing, Mrs. Claybourne was induced to sip a little. Afterwards I noticed that she sipped it quite often when the rest of us were talking, until she gradually returned to an almost cheerful frame of mind. Mr. Claybourne's anecdotes and humorous stories increased in numbers; he sandwiched many toasts in between them: to "mother"; to Helen; to "happy days"; to the "young people"; to "rum—down with it," and like persiflage of an obvious nature. At each toast "mother" raised a feeble objection, less and less prolonged as time went on. We had another bottle, for Mr. Claybourne said "A quart among four is only a teaser—an aggravation." Once Helen risked taking my hand: "Be careful, Ted, won't you?" she whispered. I nodded. Mr. Claybourne saw us. "Ted is old enough to take care of himself, Helen," he admonished, winking at me. When the second bottle was emptied, Mr. Claybourne brought forth a humidor filled with large, black Havanas.

"Now, mother, we'll carry Helen into the living room, and Ted and I are going to sit here and talk business over our cigars." I started, and Helen's free foot lightly touched mine under the table. Mr. Claybourne was delighted with the effect of his dramatic announcement. His eyes twinkled as he watched us.

"I guess you thought the old man was asleep," he chuckled, as we picked Helen up. "I wasn't born yesterday."

"Can I stay, dad?" Helen asked.

"No, we'll attend to you later, young lady," and with this cryptic threat Helen was carried off. Of course things were not working out as I had planned, but I was beginning to get used to Fate's perversity.

"Light up, Ted," commanded Mr. Claybourne upon our return to the dining room. I obeyed; my hand was not so steady as I should have wished.

"Old man Tyler let slip something last night that has set me thinking, Ted," he continued, locking his hands behind his head and studying my face attentively. "So that was how the milk was spilt," I thought. "Of course, I must say a blind

man could have told which way the wind blew," he added, with a reckless mixture of proverbs. There was a pause, during which I was trying to compose a suitable speech.

"Well, Ted, so you two kids imagine you're in love with each other?"

"We are," I said with a decision that surprised me. Again this wasn't the speech I had been composing.

"Suppose for the sake of argument we concede this point for the moment: was it playing square not to tell me?" and Mr. Claybourne blew a cloud of smoke rings toward the ceiling.

"We only found it out last night," I answered eagerly desirous to put myself in the right. "I came here today to tell you."

He looked sharply at me, chewing his cigar. I did not flinch this time.

"Some one was pretty slow," he said, breaking into a laugh. "I found it out two weeks ago." I moistened my lips and tried a smile on my own account.

"To come down to brass tacks, Ted, can you support a wife?"

"No, sir—at least, not yet."

"Then what right have you to go putting ideas in my little girl's head?"

"Because, sir, I love her, and there is good reason to believe that I shall be able to support her by next summer."

"I know more about your business, through my connection with the bank, than you do yourself," he commented. "Maybe what you say will be all right, and maybe it won't. Business is a funny game, Ted; with all your eggs in one basket you can't count your chickens before they're hatched." Proverbs always are annoying, if quoted against me.

"Well," I retorted, "my prospects are as good as the average young man's at my age, if not better." I was surprised at my own self-assurance.

"All right—we'll concede that, too," he said with a wave of his cigar. "Now, Ted, you know Helen's very young—only just out of school. Her tastes may change—probably will.

She thinks she loves you, but she's only in love with love. Neither you nor she knows what love is."

"We have to take our chances with it, just as all young people do. By the time we learn what love is we can preach it to our grandchildren." It seemed, when I spoke, as if I were listening to a third person. I really wanted to be conciliatory, but the words came to suit themselves.

"You are sentencing yourselves to each other for life; it's a long penalty to pay if you make a mistake. As for love, that doesn't help much—not the kind of thing you imagine it to be, doesn't. Marriage means a lot of plain, everyday facts—a few pleasant, more unpleasant. I married for love," he concluded reflectively.

"Yes—and it brought you Helen." This time I knew I had scored. He laid his cigar down and looked out the window. Then he turned to me: "Ted, I'll put my cards on the table; if Helen wants you she shall have you. I've never gone against her will in anything important, and I don't intend to. I wish she was older, but there's no use wishing that now." I half rose to my feet in sheer joy. "Sit down, Ted; I'm not through. I make two conditions: first, I don't want you to say anything about this to any one but Helen's mother until Christmas. Let's see how you get on when you get to know each other better. Next, if Helen takes you, she must take you as you are. Because I have been fairly successful in business won't count at all. I'll not give her a cent before I go. Helen has to make her own choice and put up with it, whether it is riches or poverty."

"As far as I am concerned, I agree to both conditions."

"You would," he assented drily. "Let's hear what Helen has to say about it."

We went into the next room, to find Helen hugging her violets to her bosom. "Mother" had gone upstairs for her afternoon rest. I boldly walked over to Helen and kissed her.

"Ted, I wish you'd stop all that until Christmas," Mr. Claybourne said grimly. We sat down, but Helen left her hand in mine.

"Well, little girl, Ted tells me you love him."

"Yes, dad dear." The look on Helen's face as she said this brought the tears to my eyes, and even Mr. Claybourne, with all his assumption of practicality, was none too comfortable.

He got up and paced the floor and gazed out at Myrtle Boulevard; then he came back to us.

"You've thought it all over—and made up your mind?" He stooped over her, turned her face up to his, and gently pushed the hair back on her forehead. Helen's grey eyes looked fearlessly into his.

"Yes, dad, I'm sure."

"What if I say 'no'?"

"You won't, dad—not when you know Ted. But if you do—why, dad, you believe I love you, don't you?—even if you said 'no' I should love Ted just the same."

Mr. Claybourne turned away and twisted one end of his moustache. There were no tears in Helen's eyes, only a quiet conviction in her voice which indicated a strength of character much like her father's. I knew that he too recognized it.

"I won't give you a penny, Helen; you've got to take him as he is, fight your own fight, and make your own way. I did it, and your grandfather did it; you'll have to do it, too."

"Then I shall do it," she answered, "as you did. I'm your daughter, and I'm not afraid—whatever the future brings, as long as I have Teddy—and he has me." She said it simply, unemotionally, like some one stating a fact.

"There's not much more to discuss, is there, Ted?" and he took my hand in a grip that hurt. "But mind you," he exclaimed, "you'll regard yourselves as both on probation. No announcement can be made before Christmas—and not then unless I say the word."

"If you don't say the word then, we'll simply run away," Helen came back at him with her dangerous calm. Then she smiled again: "Dear old dad."

He looked at me: "I warn you, Ted! You see what you are letting yourself in for. As far as I can judge, you haven't been consulted any more than I have."

"Father!" Helen interrupted.

"I hope you are prepared never to have your own way again, Edward, from this time forth."

"You can't frighten Ted that way," laughed Helen; "we both want the same things."

Mr. Claybourne snorted: "You hear that, Ted?"

I took Helen's hand, and she held it tight against her violets, crushing them and staining my palm with their fragrant juice. I didn't dare trust myself to speak.

"And now that it is all settled, let's break it to mother," Mr. Claybourne exploded with a grim attempt at his usual humour. He left the room without giving us a chance to object. I looked at Helen's face, more beautiful now than I had ever dreamed a woman's could be. A large tear rolled down her cheek, and I fell on my knees beside her, burying my face in her lap. She stroked my head.

"I'm not crying, Ted dear—I'm not the crying kind. I am just so happy I guess a—a little of it—overflowed." I kissed her wet cheek, and we sat in silence, waiting. Sounds of sobbing came from the stairs, and of patient, consolatory remarks. Helen smiled: "Poor mother—it sounds horrid to say it, but she always acts her part perfectly."

"Mother" entered, with smelling salts and dainty lace handkerchief, collapsed on her husband's shoulder, striving wonderfully for hysterics.

"Ted," said Mr. Claybourne, leading his wife to an easy chair, "I don't believe you are a very popular young man with part of the family—Lucy, I want you to shake hands with your future son-in-law."

I timidly advanced, an action which brought about a relapse. When she was a girl, daughters had the common decency to confide in their mothers; they didn't announce engagements to practically total strangers; they didn't get half-killed riding horseback with Tom, Dick, and Harry; they showed some consideration—some sense of the fitness of things; they went regularly to Church and were obedient. At this point Mr. Claybourne admitted a damaging piece of evidence.

"We ran away to be married, Lucy, when you were seventeen and we had just one hundred and twenty-seven dollars between us. What's more, I've never regretted it," he finished, with unexpected tenderness in his voice.

"Mother!" Helen pleaded, and she stretched out her arms. Mrs. Claybourne staggered across the room and melodramatically hurled herself upon her daughter. At the end of another outpouring of sobs and tears, she consented reluctantly to shake hands, and submitted to a formal kiss from me, at Helen's command. I am afraid I did not linger very long over it. With a few more remarks about no one having any regard for her wishes, or taking into consideration her nervous state, she began to cheer up remarkably.

Upon noting these favorable symptoms, Mr. Claybourne announced that he was off for the club, at the same time inviting me to stay and "amuse Helen" until after supper.

"I hope, Martin, you are not going to play cards on Sunday—at the least, not for money." Mr. Claybourne showed long practice in the skill with which he evaded a direct reply, and left hurriedly.

"I don't know what we shall do, Helen, when we announce your engagement. Neither of us have any clothes fit to wear."

I was staggered by this transition to the practical, but at least the implication was that the period of resistance was over.

"We can go to New York before Christmas," Helen said.

"Your father is always complaining I spend too much money," mother sighed, "although he seems to forget, Edward, that I have a grown-up daughter to manage. Of course, now I won't be able to go to Palm Beach for the winter, as I had planned, and this climate is simply killing my nerves. But I don't suppose that ever entered either of your heads."

Helen's eyes danced as we stole a look at one another, but Mrs. Claybourne continued, unconscious of anything but herself: "There isn't a single dressmaker in this city who can turn out a decent evening dress, and all Helen's clothes will have to be made to order—she can't wear *jeune fille* things any more.

Oh, dear, and I don't suppose I'll have any help planning your trousseau—you and Edward will be off riding horseback day and night—it will all be left for me to settle, and I declare I haven't the health or the strength."

There was no use trying to assure her that we probably should take some interest in the course of subsequent events. Our engagement settled itself down as a conspiracy to prevent her from going to Palm Beach; moreover, it was a deliberately chosen scheme to add to her cares and responsibilities at a time when her nerves were on the edge of a general breakdown. By some mysterious tactful process Helen persuaded her mother to take another rest, and we were left alone.

I drew my chair up beside her. "Poor Ted," she smiled; "you've had quite a trying day."

"Did I put my foot in it anywhere?" I asked.

She laughed: "Not once, unless you consider an engagement to me, now you know the family, putting your foot in it."

"Why did Ludwig von Oberhausen send you flowers?"

"Ah, I knew you'd ask that at the first opportunity. Why do you suppose he did?" she teased.

"Because you are the most beautiful girl in the world."

"Stuff, Ted, that wasn't the reason; besides, only you could believe that. It was because he thought I had money; I was number three on his list. Oh, he was methodical about it, Ted, beginning with a formal call on mother on her day at home. Every Saturday night at six a dozen American beauties arrived, until you galloped over the horizon that day on Satan."

This was comforting. "Did you care for him?"

"No, you jealous pig."

"Helen," I said, with masculine solemnity and inappropriateness, "is this really the first time—for you?"

Afterwards I was thankful she had a sense of humour; in a normal frame of mind I should not have propounded such a banal absurdity. It was excess of good fortune which destroyed my sense of proportion. She flushed slightly for a moment, more because it was a shock to find me so stupid than because the question hurt her.

"Ted, it isn't like us," she said gently, using the phrase that so many times, in the days to come, kept me steady on my feet and my face in the clouds—"it isn't like us to—to doubt each other even in tiny things. Of course, I've had boy friends who have sat on the beach with me and watched the moon rise or begged me for an extra allowance of dances." She smiled, and there was a pause, during which I felt humble and guilty. The back of my neck was uncomfortably hot. "I've met only one Ted—my Sir Edward of Overseas," and she laid her hand on mine. There followed a long silence.

"Teddy dear," she said at last. "Tell me more about England."

Until after the room grew dark I told her all I could—of my family; of country life in Hertfordshire, with its packs of hounds, straggly villages, and grey parish churches on the summits of windy hills; of London, with its mystery and romance and its age-old stories. It sounds as if I lectured poor Helen like a school teacher. In reality it was a true lover's conversation—she questioning and curious about her home-to-be, I trying to make her see it through my eyes. I was young and sentimental; I had not then learned that patriotism and love of home are suburban and unintellectual emotions.

Suddenly I cried out: "Good Heavens, dearest, it's half past five, and I forgot I have to go on duty at six! I can't stay to supper—I must run now."

"Won't they let you off this once, if you telephone?"

I hesitated, for the temptation was strong, but it wouldn't be fair to Knowlton. It would mean a twenty-four hour stretch for him if I stayed away, I explained.

"Of course you must go, Ted. Let's try not to be selfish in our happiness—ever." I kissed her and left with these words repeating themselves over and over in my ears.

When I reached the factory I found Knowlton pacing the floor.

"I've been wanting to get you all day, Ted. I didn't like

to call you up at the Claybournes', as I knew you'd be here at six. There's the devil to pay."

"What do you mean?"

"Prospero's companion, the circus woman, has gone. All your chemistry notes of our experiments have disappeared too. Prospero is in his room raving drunk. He swears you have tricked him and stolen the secret of his great discovery. He threatens law, murder, anything he can think of."

"That part is all right," I said. "The notes are serious."

"Can you reconstruct them?"

"Not all," I answered "without repeating part of the experiments."

"How long will that take?"

"A minimum of six weeks."

"I was a triple damn fool, Ted, not to keep a copy of your work in the office safe. There's the Texas contract which we must begin work on tomorrow. Do you know the formula?"

"No, that was Prospero's discovery—but I know how he went at it."

"Go to the laboratory, Ted, and stick at it as long as you can, night and day. If you can work out that formula, you can have two weeks at Christmas. If you can't, we are done for. The bank is carrying us now on the strength of our Texas contract—if we can't make good on it, you and I have finished with Deep Harbor. Can I telephone for a chemist to help you?"

"Yes—get me a young, trained research man—and see if the Owen people will lend us one of their best laboratory men. Of course, you'll have to pay like the deuce—"

"That doesn't matter—you'll get your man. And, Ted?"

"Yes?"

"I'd rather you wouldn't tell Miss Claybourne about this—her father is a director in the bank—"

"Miss Claybourne does not repeat—" I began.

"Nevertheless—why worry her with your troubles, Ted, until necessary?"

"Then you know about—us?" I asked naïvely.

"I'm not a damned fool in everything, Ted."

"All right—I shan't tell her unless I have to."

With this I went into the laboratory. During my absence, Prospero or his companion, or both together, had searched the place from top to bottom. Every bottle with a paper label had been carefully washed and the labels removed. Galvanometers, ammeters, voltmeters, all our delicate instruments, including the chemical balances, had been rendered inaccurate, hence useless until re-calibrated. They had worked with skill, for nothing had been taken. My notes had been burned one by one in a Bunsen flame, and the ashes powdered. A careful inventory revealed a situation difficult to explain to a court of law and still more difficult to prove. It was true the documents weren't there and their ashes were. It was another matter to establish these facts on a witness stand.

I sent for Joe, the day watchman, who had been detained by Knowlton until my examination of the laboratory was complete.

"Who used the laboratory today, Joe?" I asked the burly Pole who looked after the plant on Sundays.

"Mr. Fougeer—an' Mrs. Fougeer—they worked here all day—mos' important job, he tells me—I let 'em in building—he have key to this room."

"What time did they leave?"

"Bout tree 'clock. I fin' door unlock' near six—Mr. Fougeer, he forgot lock him—I lock door—everything he look O. K. inside."

"All right, Joe. You did your duty," Knowlton said, dismissing him. Naturally we had given orders that Prospero was to have access to the laboratory at any time, not suspecting this form of danger.

"There are three hours unaccounted for with the door unlocked. I suppose that was done with some idea of using it as an alibi," I said.

"It does beat hell, the cussed things that can happen in this world, Ted," Knowlton generalized. "Still, I want to go very easy on any legal proceedings, for two good reasons: it's pos-

sible I can talk to Prospero when he's sober, and second, any publicity will put the bank wise that we're in a double extra deep bottomless hole."

"You know we have to get all our chemicals from New York—so the first thing to do is to make out a list, for I can't risk using these unlabelled bottles, even those that are easily recognized. The contents may have been tampered with."

"Can you test that?" Knowlton asked.

"Yes." I took at random two or three bottles and poured some of their contents into test-tubes. I then tried a few simple reactions. In each case, the chemical purity of the materials proved to have been destroyed. Our hands were completely tied.

"That old devil would never have thought of that all by himself," Knowlton said, after a string of complicated introductory epithets. "The circus woman did that—I recognize the feminine touch."

"I can't help admiring the skill with which it was done. Not a bottle betrays by sight or smell, except for the missing label, that the contents aren't all right."

Knowlton grinned, in spite of himself.

"Good boy, Ted. I'm glad to see you aren't panic-stricken, any way. Well, I might as well go home and get some sleep. You make out your list and telegraph tonight."

I began my list of needed materials, wondering the while what Helen would say if she knew how the day was ending for us both. The thought of her put a desperate eagerness into me—I was not going to be beaten, black as things looked. Then a new idea came to me. Prospero would probably appear in the morning to see the results; if he found me simply getting ready to begin again, he might try a new scheme to injure us. On the other hand, if he saw me working away with the damaged chemicals, as if ignorant of what had happened to them, he would conclude his devilish plan was succeeding and keep quiet. I left my desk, lit the Bunsen burners under the sand baths, and set out several dishes of compounds to stew and evaporate. I spent an hour or more in care-

fully setting my stage; under the safety hood there was a fuming beaker; there were filtrates in various stages of progress, in addition to the dishes over the flames. It was a normal-looking night's work—a continuation of Friday's experiments to all outward appearances. Then I returned to my real work.

About four in the morning I heard a familiar step, and my heart leaped to think I had so well prepared for just this contingency. Prospero entered, bleary, dishevelled, his flowing black tie loose and streaming, his brass-buttoned waist-coat buttoned awry, his yellow gloves dirty and stained. On his face was the leering, crafty expression of the drunkard or the insane.

"You're early," I remarked drily, barely glancing at him.

"Got a big idea, Teddy—biggest idea I ever had—you know that?"

"Glad to hear it," and I scratched away at my list.

"Makin' notes, Ted? That's right—always keep your notes," and he roared a drunken laugh. He walked over to one of the experiments and smelt the beaker cautiously. He was evidently satisfied his plan was working, for he laughed long and loudly again. "That's good stuff, Ted. Bril-brilliant idea—if it works. You must keep careful notes on that ex—experiment."

I looked at him. "You are a great chemist, Mr. de Fou-gère, but even I know enough to know you can't always tell what's in a beaker by the smell." The sarcasm missed him.

"That's right, Ted—that's right. Best ex-experiments look all right—good theory, but won't work."

He lit a cigarette and hummed a wabbly tune, sitting astride a chair and watching me with his empty leer.

"Why did you wash all the labels off the bottles?" I asked quietly.

"Secrecy, Teddy—secrecy. Important work here—worth millions. Any one could walk in and find out all about it. We know all the bottles, now, Teddy—don't need labels, do we?"

The telephone stood on my desk in front of me, and I meditated calling up Knowlton. Finally I thought better of it, for my play was not to let Prospero know we had any inkling of the truth.

"That's a good idea," I said, "taking off the labels. I never thought of it just that way before."

"Of course you didn't, Ted. You don't know the world. "It's a rough place, my boy—a rough place."

"It has delayed me some, because you didn't tell me first," I went on casually. "For instance, I want the bottle with the mixture made up according to the formula you worked out for the Texas contract. We have to start work on that job at seven." I paused and pretended to look through my papers.

"The Texas contract, eh? You know the formula—go ahead and make it." He hugged one knee and his eyes narrowed at me.

"No," I said, "that was your work."

"It's in your notes, Ted. Look it up."

"I took a copy of them away with me Saturday morning—I'll have to go down after them, if you don't tell me."

He sprang to his feet: "You lie, Ted, God damn you, you lie!" My hand reached for the telephone, then paused. I was puzzled about what my next move ought to be.

"Are you goin' to sit there and let me call you a liar?" he challenged. I turned around in my chair and looked him over. Excitement was working him up to a frenzy; his lips drooled. He wasn't a pleasant sight, but, curiously, I felt no physical fear; it was the critical business situation that alarmed me.

"I haven't time for a personal quarrel, Fougère," I said. "At present our business is to make good on the Texas contract. It's true that I have no copy of the notes you destroyed."

"Ah!" he exulted.

"Cut out the melodrama," I said with a pretence of boredom, "and come back when you are sober. This is too important a matter to play with."

“You admit it!” he shouted. “I’ve beaten you at your own filthy game!” He turned and crashed two of my stewing beakers to the floor and trampled on the mess. “Not one of your experiments will work—I’ve ruined them all! You tried to trick me, but by God, you couldn’t do it!”

“I know that you are a drunkard and a thief—and one or two other things—that you break your word and have neither honour nor loyalty.” I was getting as eloquent as Prospero himself. “Still, you’ll tell me that formula or you’ll land in gaol.”

“You can’t prove anything against me—but I can prove you tried to steal my great discovery—it was there, in your notes, and I have a witness.” He raved in his excitement, pacing the floor like a wild animal.

“What discovery?” I asked, as he bore down on me.

“The making of electricity direct from coal.”

“Oh, hell!” I exclaimed. “I haven’t had time to waste on moonshine. At your own request I recorded all your experiments, even when I didn’t know what nonsense they were all about.”

“I—I make nonsense—you ignorant—”

“Shut up! I want the Texas formula.”

“You’ll pay me my terms for it.”

“No, I won’t. I’ll pay mine, which is the salary you were hired for. You have one wife in Cripple Creek”—he started, and grasped the back of a chair—“it was foolish of you to marry the circus woman too. Bigamy is still a crime,” and I felt quite satisfied with myself as I noted the effect of this. “Well,” I thought, “when it comes to playing melodrama with a drug fiend, you are not bad, Ted!” His hands shook, but he managed to light another cigarette.

“Ted, I’ve been drinking,” he mumbled, with an ugly grin that ought to have warned me he wasn’t through. “I don’t know what I’ve been saying”—he staggered to his feet and offered his lean scraggy hand—“I’m a good friend of yours, Ted. I always have been. You forget the wife in Cripple Creek—and we’ll mix up the Texas formula.”

I took his hand, feeling quite triumphant. "Knowlton will be proud of me," I thought.

"I'll forget either wife you say—or both," I said. "Let's get to work."

"That's it. Work. You're a good fellow, Teddy," and he lurched toward the shelves of bottles. "You thought I'd thrown it away?" he turned with his leer again. "You're wrong, Ted. I'm too old a fox for that, eh? Here it is," and he handed me a blue glass bottle with a rubber cork. "Right under your nose all the time, and you didn't know it."

I snatched it eagerly from him, and he chuckled. I was so certain that I was carrying all before me no suspicion crossed my mind.

"Analyze it, Ted, if you don't trust me," he urged.

"It's only business if I do," I replied.

"That's right—get it down in black and white. I never remember formulas."

I poured a little into a test tube; in colour and appearance it was as I remembered it to be. He took the tube from me and lightly passed it back and forth through a Bunsen flame. The liquid bubbled and began to give off fumes whose odour was queer—unlike what I expected. I felt dizzy for a moment, but recovered.

"It doesn't smell like the other when you evaporate it," I said, with returning suspicion.

"It's all right, Ted. I added an aromatic oil to it to throw curious people off the track—we haven't got our patent yet, and the world's a rough place, Ted."

"I hope you haven't ruined it," I exclaimed, much angered. One of the curses of his work was the fact that he never allowed a formula to be finished, but was always adding, adding to it.

"Perfectly harmless, Ted. Just a pleasant smell—that's all."

He poured some more into a shallow Meissen dish and placed it over the sand-bath flame.

"Watch it, Ted. The crystals are long and needlelike when it evaporates down. It's easy to analyse then."

I sat over it in my excitement, with the pleasant smelling fumes now and then blowing in my face. The hawk-like countenance of Prospero peered over my shoulder.

Why was he wearing a magician's robe, I wondered, with stars of gold and signs of the Zodiac upon it? Was it drink that made his eyes shine with blue fire? Opposite me Helen was standing, dressed in mediaeval costume, her hair flowing, violets trailing everywhere about her. I tried to speak to her, and to take her hand, and could not, even when she smiled. I wanted to tell her that Milton's epithet about the violet was true—"the glowing violet"—there they were glowing like the liquid in a test tube, or like the philosopher's stone, which was it?

Then I knew no more.

CHAPTER NINE

I COME FACE TO FACE WITH THE FUTURE

I OPENED my eyes, and there was Helen smiling at me—not in mediaeval dress this time, but with a bunch of glowing violets at her belt. How curious for her to come to the laboratory at night! I looked about: there was Knowlton sitting near with the cheerfulest of grins on his face, and Mr. Claybourne too. What was happening? I made an effort, as I realized I had something of importance to tell Knowlton.

“The Texas formula—” words seemed strangely difficult to say—“Prospero has it. It’s in the blue bottle with the rubber cork—”

“Hush, dear,” I heard Helen say, “you mustn’t try to talk just yet,” and she patted my pillow, kissed me, and gave me something cool to drink. I looked blankly about, but the room was quite dark—I was in bed!

“Isn’t this the laboratory?” I asked helplessly. My head ached and whirled; my thoughts refused to work at this new problem.

“No, dearest,” Helen’s gentle voice said, “you are at home—with me.”

“Home?” I wrestled vaguely with this idea. Where was home?—with me?

“At my house, Ted, dear—here in Deep Harbor,” Helen whispered, her lips brushing my cheek.

“Your knee—you mustn’t stand,” I faltered, some recollection fighting through the chaos in my head.

“It’s almost well, Ted dear. Watch me walk!” and she took a few steps away, then back to me.

“But last night—?” I gave it up as Helen put her cool hand over my mouth to silence me.

"Well, well," I heard a hearty sounding voice say at the door, "it's quite seasonable weather for Thanksgiving, isn't it? Snowing like the deuce—whew! And how's our patient this morning? I'll bet he slept all right last night after that potion I gave him," and a frock-coated, checked-waistcoated man walked up to my bed.

"Hello," he said quickly as he looked at me, speaking in a low tone to Helen. "When did the delirium leave him?"

"He has just waked up," I heard her reply.

"Who are you?" I said, almost aggressively, to the new arrival.

"Who am I? Come, that's a good one," he chuckled, apparently immensely pleased. "Who am I, Claybourne, eh?"

"Ted, this is Dr. Sinclair, who has been looking after you ever since."

"Ever since what?" I persisted. It was all a most annoying puzzle. "Helen, can't you explain?—please!" I said petulantly.

"Now then, how's our temperature today?"—and before I could say more Dr. Sinclair rendered me speechless with a little glass rod in my mouth that I was mortally afraid of breaking. I lay there, looking first at him and then at Helen, who smiled encouragement at me; Dr. Sinclair kept his eyes on a noisy gold watch. Rebellion was gathering headway within: why was I being treated like a child and put to bed? Some doctor's silly whim; he probably had made Helen believe I'd been overworking, when there was the Texas formula to solve. It was preposterous to lose time this way! What was the matter with Knowlton, that he let them do it?

"Well!" exclaimed the doctor, walking to the window with his thermometer and letting in the light. I could see snow on the roofs opposite. "We are almost normal again—not quite, but almost." Helen clapped her hands and gave a little cry. He shook the thermometer vigorously, put it away in his coat, put on his glasses, and surveyed me over the tops of them from the window. "No excitement yet—no worry, remember that,

Miss Helen. Absolute quiet—nature's restorative, you know—that's the word. Give nature a chance, that's all we need now."

"You don't need to talk about me as if I were a baby," I interjected, my eyes burning with a strange anger.

"Hush, dear—you trust me, don't you?" I heard Helen say.

"Of course," I said, baffled and abandoning the struggle. It was all right to leave it in her hands.

"That's one of the symptoms," Dr. Sinclair coughed into the palm of his hand. I could hear every syllable. "Extreme excitability and irritation; the least little thing will arouse it. Hence caution, my dear young lady, caution. Keep on with the jellied boullion—not too much—just a few spoonfuls—"

"Damn it, I'm not an invalid!" I tried to shout, but my voice broke, and only husky, throaty sounds came forth. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Claybourne—I didn't mean to swear before Helen—but I don't like that smug, oily, self-satisfied man—" and I pointed my finger at Dr. Sinclair. The latter took a step or two backward, like a person retreating from an unpleasant footing.

"Ahem!" coughed Dr. Sinclair. "I think, Miss Helen, it will be wiser to tell him—you can do it best, without exciting him. Er—I'll look in again this evening." Mr. Claybourne accompanied him downstairs.

"What are they planning to do with me now?" and I tried to rise up on one elbow, but found it unaccountably beyond my strength. Helen put one arm around me.

"You believe in me, don't you, Ted?"

"Yes," and I clutched her hand. "Please keep the others away from me. I must tell you something—it's important—"

Knowlton arose. "Don't bother about that now, Ted," he said. "I know all about the Texas formula—it's all right—do you get me?"

"I think I'd go, Mr. Knowlton," Helen said. "Let me tell him all by myself."

Knowlton bowed and shook her hand. Then he came over to me and offered his hand to me.

"Ted, I'm not much of a talker; this is just to tell you I'm glad."

I took his hand, since he seemed to wish it, and he left the room. I looked around at Helen: "Why did you come to me at the laboratory last night in mediaeval dress when Prospero was trying an incantation?"

Her face clouded, and she hastened to me, laying her cool hand on my forehead.

"Hush, Teddy, sweetheart," she put her face close to mine. I could feel that her eyelashes were wet.

"It was the formula—not an incantation," I went on—"it must have been the signs of the Zodiac that confused me."

"Teddy, do you know me?—it's Helen," she kissed into my ear.

"I know, dear, I know," I said. "I love you, Lady Grey Eyes."

She kissed me on the mouth. "Then listen, Ted, and try not to interrupt. Just lie quietly here and hold my hand."

"Of course," I promised.

"Prospero was a very wicked man, Ted—"

"He drank and was a drug fiend, but he does know the formula—"

"You promised not to interrupt." Every word of her gentle voice was soothing; I could feel it steal over me, driving away a great fatigue. "Quite quiet, Ted?"

"Yes."

"That night at the laboratory he tried to poison you, Ted, with fumes from a mixture in a dish. You were unconscious when they found you."

I laughed weakly, it all sounded so preposterous.

"You don't know chemistry, dear," I said, feeling quite superior. "He couldn't poison me that way without poisoning himself."

"He did," Helen said very slowly. "When they found you, Prospero was dead."

It took a long time for this to get into my brain in plausible shape.

"Prospero—dead?" I puzzled.

"Yes, dear."

"But there was nothing poisonous in the fumes of the Texas formula—only an aromatic oil to deceive meddlers."

"Prospero used that oil as a solvent for the poison—you see, Ted, I've been studying chemistry too—I shall read you the analysis we had made, tomorrow."

"Analysis—then you've found out the Texas formula?"

"Yes, Ted. It's all right—the factory is making it now."

"Did you work it out?" I asked—the puzzle was only slowly unravelling.

"No, dear—my chemistry hasn't gone that far! The young assistant Knowlton got from the Owens' Company did it."

"And the poison?"

"That was the difficulty. When we first got to you, Ted, we didn't know what it was, or what antidote to use. Your heart had slowed down to almost nothing—"

"There is a poison chart with a list of the symptoms and antidotes in my desk."

"Yes, Ted. I found that, and we got Dr. Sinclair quickly."

"You found it?"

"It was about five in the morning when one of the foremen happened to go into your laboratory. It made him ill, for the place was reeking—you and Prospero were lying on the floor. He threw open the windows and telephoned Mr. Knowlton. He dressed and called up father, and I went too, in spite of my knee."

"But why did Knowlton call up your father?"

"To let me know, Ted. Wasn't that dear of him? And I was really able to help. They wanted to take you to a hospital, but dad wouldn't listen to that—and so here you are."

I kissed her hand and tried to put in order the story as she had told it.

"I wonder why it didn't kill me, if it killed Prospero?" I felt her clutch my hand.

"I wonder too, Ted darling," she whispered. "The doctor says your youth and constitution saved you. I wonder if that explains all?"

"Perhaps there *was* something to help—your love and care," I smiled.

"Even something beyond that, Ted dear. You see, Prospero had no chance, the doctor said, because of his drinking and drug-taking."

"It must have been a shock to 'mother.' " I don't know why I hadn't thought of her before, or why I thought of her now. Helen laughed one of her "questing laughs," the happy kind that only I was privileged to hear.

"Poor mother! She telegraphed for Miss Hershey to come and chaperon me and went herself to Asheville until Christmas. To have a real invalid in the house was the last straw!"

"But Leonidas!" I cried. "The poor hound is shut up in my rooms."

"No, he isn't, Ted. Dad went for him. He is asleep in front of the fire downstairs."

"So you are in Miss Hershey's hands?"

"Yes, but she is wonderfully tame, Ted, now she knows about you."

"What a marvellous forty-eight hours it has been!" I said. "We set forth after the questing beast in the morning—and before two suns, find love and life and death, all very near one another and each of them lurking in the most unlikely places."

"I think, Ted, that that is always the way one finds them—love, and life, and death are very near together—everywhere just as we have read of them in Mallory."

She went to the window and looked out.

"The snow is getting deep, Ted—you wouldn't know Myrtle Boulevard."

"Yes, I should," I answered. "It is the way leading down to Camelot."

She smiled, and the snow-light shone on her face, making her beauty luminous.

"It's Thanksgiving Day, Ted—did you know it?"

"Then I've been here—"

"Ten days." She came back to my side.

"Thanksgiving," I heard her murmur to herself—"dear God! I'm thankful."

"And you have nursed me all this time?"

"No, dear. You have a trained nurse to look after you—it was too serious to take any chances. I'm only the girl who loves you," and she tucked a violet over my left ear, laughing with the old ring of mischief in her voice. "Now you've talked enough and must go to sleep. I'll come back soon and bring you your Thanksgiving dinner—some delicious jellied bouillion. No—not another word," and she was gone, closing the door after her.

Naturally I could not sleep. In the first place, I argued with myself, my head not only feels queer but it aches abominably; in the second place, enough has happened to give insomnia to all the seven sleepers of Ephesus. The latter thought pleased me, and I laughed all by myself. My mind began to stroll about again in a waking dream, partly caused by my weakness and partly by the delirium which had ceased only a few hours ago. Why had Prospero tried to kill me? It seemed a motiveless thing to do, particularly as he had chosen to involve himself. Must have been insane, I concluded. He was fairly skilful about it, too—how did they know I hadn't killed *him*? There we both were, and no one to say who put the poison in the dish. This worried me. Suppose they ask me awkward questions at the inquest? I must talk to Helen about that. Helen! I hardly dared think about her—her love was the most wonderful thing in the world—why had she given it to me? How had I deserved it? It was a miracle one couldn't analyse. . . .

"Ted, dear, it's time to take your medicine." I almost sat up, I was so surprised. I had slept, after all—most soundly. Furthermore, I felt refreshed and stronger. There stood Helen in the door, with a buxom-looking young woman in nurse's uniform beside her, carrying a glass on a tray.

"This is your nurse, Miss Conover, Ted."

"How do you do?" I said to this person, who began to bang my pillows about in a most business-like way, as much as to imply she was not in the habit of putting up with any nonsense from her patients.

"Quite well, thank you," and she presented a spoonful of medicine.

"What's in it?" I asked. "I'm a chemist, and I don't like to take unknown compounds."

"You aren't a biological chemist, are you?"

"No."

"Then you'd better follow your doctor's orders."

I felt that curious anger against strangers coming back.

"If you don't tell me what it is—I'll—I'll spill it on the floor," I said.

Helen stepped forward quickly.

"You'll take it from me, Ted, won't you?" and she offered the spoon. "It's a sedative, dear—we had to give you such quantities of stimulants to counteract the poison."

Calm returned, and I meekly licked the spoon.

"Take her away!" I whispered to Helen, rolling my head toward the aggressively efficient Miss Conover, who was tidying the room energetically.

"Ted, dear, you are getting well now. You must get used to strangers about you, especially when they have been so kind to you as Dr. Sinclair and Miss Conover," and Helen patted my shoulder.

Miss Conover joined in: "Didn't I tell you, Miss Helen, they was a whole lot easier to get on with delirious than convalescent? You was wishing for him to come out of it, but you ain't had my experience. I'd rather put a straight jacket on a nut than fetch a pipe and tobacco for a man the day before his hospital discharge."

Helen looked down at me with her eyes dancing, and the black murder that had been swelling up in me, during Miss Conover's disquisition on the care of men, subsided.

"I'll send her away, Ted," she said, kissing me. "I believe this time you are right."

Mr. Claybourne came in, radiating cheerfulness.

"Well, Ted, old man, how's the boy?" he shouted.

"Quietly, dad, quietly," reproved Helen.

"He's that touchy! It's only the effect of the fever. They are nearly always like that afterwards. Why, I've seen 'em pass away growling at everybody right up to the finish," Miss Conover threw in for good measure.

"I'm very grateful to you, Mr. Claybourne," I stammered, ignoring the nurse.

"Oh, tell all that to Helen," he laughed. "She's responsible, anyway. Come, little girl, it's two o'clock, and there's a big turkey and fixin's waiting downstairs. You'll have to leave Ted awhile to eat Thanksgiving dinner with your dad."

"There's a dramatic choice for you, Helen—parental love and duty versus self-sacrifice beside the pallid cot of the lowly and sick," I smiled at her.

"Dad, Ted's recovering a sense of humour—it's a little clumsy and conceited still, but it's coming back! Dad,—why can't we have this room cleared and our table set up here? You know Ted hasn't seen a Thanksgiving turkey since he was a little boy. They don't have Thanksgiving in England—and it seems so mean to go downstairs and stuff all by ourselves!"

Mr. Claybourne looked doubtfully about the room. I sympathized with his feelings, for a sick room is the last place one would choose for a banquet.

"That would be too much like writing *Hamlet* in a charnel house. Can't you carry me downstairs? and I'll sit with Leonidas before the fire while the rest of you gorge," I urged.

"How about that, Miss Conover?" Claybourne asked. Miss Conover looked at me, and I suspected revenge to be brooding in her eye. Helen added her entreaty, and the nurse wavered.

"I suppose there'll be less trouble in the end if we carry him down, though what Dr. Sinclair will say, goodness knows," Miss Conover conceded grudgingly. "But it'll only be for an hour, and then no more talk or visitors today."

"Agreed," I cried; "any price you say, nurse."

"Miss Conover," she corrected.

"I beg your pardon—good nature made me careless." Helen giggled. I was rolled up in dressing gown and blankets and carried downstairs by Mr. Claybourne, Helen and Miss Conover followed with pillows and miscellaneous glassware. Leonidas took a sniff at me and then greeted me with the most exuberant enthusiasm, knocking over at least one piece of furniture by the sheer power in his wagging tail. I had an armchair before a fire of crackling hickory logs; there was a small table beside me, with some of Helen's violets in a little vase in the centre.

Helen, her father, and Miss Conover sat at their gaily decked table, on which was a mountain of autumn fruit piled about an enormous pumpkin. The maid brought in a turkey as big as a boar's head. Mr. Claybourne busied himself with opening a bottle of champagne. Helen insisted that the turkey be placed before me and helped me carve the first slice before it was removed to Mr. Claybourne's seat.

"Isn't it a shame you can't eat any of it," Helen cried. Just then I did not care to. To tell the truth, the smell of the food made me feel so ill I was not certain I could stick the dinner out. But I knew better than to give Miss Conover an inkling of this. "It isn't as if one could make a dash for the upper deck, either," I thought to myself. At a critical moment the nurse placed some jellied bouillon before me and threatened forcible feeding. "One inch nearer with a spoonful of that stuff, and there'll be a real catastrophe," I murmured inwardly. I violently waved it away. Helen flew to my rescue. "I think if we leave Ted quite alone, he'll eat it by himself when he feels like it," she advised Miss Conover.

"The doctor ordered him to eat it," the nurse stubbornly contended. Helen conquered her, and I was left, not exactly at peace, but in a state of armed neutrality within. By concentrating my attention on the dancing flames in the chimney I kept the internal factions quiet.

Mr. Claybourne ran through his series of champagne toasts, repeating all the funny ones we had heard last time. He was eager for me to have one sip, but Helen stood firm. Miss

Conover sat in stern disapproval of the champagne, her glass inverted before her, as if to emphasize with a kind of crystal exclamation point her opinion of such proceedings.

"Where is Miss Hershey?" I asked, as soon as I had the stomach for such a question.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, Ted. She's dining out with an ex-governor of Georgia—I believe a third cousin twice removed of her mother's aunt, or some complicated Southern family relationship like that."

"I thought she said he was her cousin," Mr. Claybourne corrected. Helen winked at me; Miss Hershey would have called it "unmaidenly."

"I believe all Southerners who are anybody are each other's cousins, dad. Anyway, she said they didn't pay much attention to Thanksgiving in the South, and she preferred not to be here."

"The bloody shirt again, eh?" said Mr. Claybourne.

"I can't imagine Miss Hershey in a bloody shirt," I murmured.

"Really Mr. Edward!" Miss Conover exclaimed, half rising from the table. Helen laughed. "I don't think such remarks is nice," Miss Conover continued.

"H'm," said Mr. Claybourne, evidently wondering what it was all about.

"How's your foot, Ted?" Helen called out.

"There's nothing the matter with Ted's foot, is there?" said Mr. Claybourne.

"Not a thing!" snapped Miss Conover.

"There's your answer, Lady Grey Eyes," I laughed.

"What are we talking about?" Mr. Claybourne inquired.

"It's just a private joke between Ted and me, dad. You wouldn't understand," Helen explained.

"Then I don't think it's very polite of you to refer to it before others," her father grumbled. "I'm surprised at you, Ted."

"My opinion exactly," Miss Conover hastened to agree.

The tension was broken by the arrival of the maid with three

kinds of pie—mince, pumpkin, and cranberry. Upon the later arrival of coffee, Miss Conover got up from the table.

"Time's up," she announced. "We'll carry Mr. Edward upstairs."

"A bargain's a bargain, and I'll go quietly," I said, "but damn it all just the same."

"Edward, will you oblige me by not swearing before Helen," Mr. Claybourne declaimed.

"I beg your pardon—and Helen's, if she wants it. Happiness has a bad effect on my manners."

They put me away in the dark room. . . .

In the morning Knowlton dropped in to see me on the way to the office. Dr. Sinclair had called first and expressed approval of my progress. He also gave permission to talk business for half an hour, which was why I had Knowlton summoned by telephone.

"Well, Ted, our friend nearly did for you," he said with his diabolic grin, as he drew a chair alongside my bed. "I certainly was scared until the doc said he thought he could pull you through." I knew that for Knowlton to admit this much was for him to confess he had passed through an emotional crisis. Of course the way he put it was part of the "hard-headed" pose of all our race, whether English or American. It is the half-unconscious way in which we hide our sentimentality when the latter collides with reality.

"Thanks, Knowlton," I replied; "it would be awkward for the business if I got out ahead of time." I could not resist teasing him this much.

"Wasn't just what I meant, Ted," he said, squirming uncomfortably. "Well, I guess it doesn't matter. The point now is that the Owens people sent us a crackerjack, A-number-one man, and he analyzed the Texas formula in a jiffy, so to speak. Prospero lost us only four days, and the Owens man has speeded us up so we have made that good. He costs like hell, though, and as soon as you can get out again, Ted, I'll let him go."

"When will I be back, do you think?"

"Not until after Christmas—and then no more night work. We'll move you back to the day-shift. It's a damned nuisance."

"It's something of a nuisance for me, too," I said, "having your pet employee trying to murder me. I hope you appreciate it has been inconvenient."

Knowlton grinned: "Good boy, Ted, that's the stuff. Never lose your nerve."

"Why did Prospero do it?—that's what I can't understand."

"Paranoia, Ted—delusion of persecution: he worked with you, so he chose you for his best hallucination. Thought you were stealing his great idea about electricity direct from coal."

"How do you know? Did he leave a confession sticking out of his right boot?" I tried what I imagined to be sarcasm.

"No, but he used to tell me all about it. Said you dogged his every step. I warned you, Ted, to look out for him. I never thought he'd pull anything off in the factory with three hundred workmen all around. Outside, I judged you were pretty safe—besides, his time was 'most up. I guess I was a little careless, Ted."

"What did the police say? Were they interested?"

"Not much, after they heard my story. The Chief is a good friend of mine—I play pinochle with him Saturday nights. He thinks it just as well for you to look in at the Coroner's office some day when you are all right—just to dictate a little account of how it happened. He wants it to complete his records."

I marvelled at this easy-going, personally conducted justice.

"How about the circus woman?"

"Oh, we let her go. What was the use? She has an alibi a mile long."

"Do you mean to say all this can happen without any one being interested enough to require an investigation?"

"Sure—didn't I tell you I fixed it up with the Chief? He knows we're on the square, Ted. The newspapers ran a peach

of a story—whole front page. I gave 'em a picture of you I dug out of your room. You'll find yourself quite a local hero when you get out. There was some good sob stuff in it about Miss Claybourne nursing you back from the Valley of the Shadow. I don't believe her old man liked it."

"I should think not," I cried indignantly. "It was outrageous."

"Well, Ted, I don't believe you'll have to announce your engagement. It's saved you that much trouble. The paper said you were related to the English nobility, and hinted that Miss Claybourne was the true explanation of your coming to Deep Harbor. When the evening paper came out, the headline man boosted you up a notch higher—something about 'English peer's son nursed by local society girl'—say, you furnished 'em great stuff for three days."

"That must be the real reason 'mother' went to Asheville," I reflected.

"Ted, what I don't understand is how Prospero could slip anything like that over on you. As a chemist you ought to know enough to look out for fumes. How'd he do it? Hypnotize you?"

"Like you," I replied, "I guess I was a little careless. You see, oil of cassia has a pleasant smell—really delicious—it's just like cinnamon, you know. I thought I'd bluffed Prospero into doing what I wanted, and—I don't know—one doesn't expect murder and suicide."

Knowlton rubbed his chin. "Let's hear the whole yarn," he said. I told him everything that had happened from the time he left me that night until I lost consciousness. At the end, Knowlton grinned: "Ted, the *Eagle* reporter can beat you all hollow telling that story. Wait until you see what he says happened. But he didn't know about the wife in Cripple Creek—you've scored on the *Eagle* there. Now take a little advice from me, Ted. The next time you try to blackmail a paranoiac because he's a bigamist, don't do it."

"Blackmail him?"

"Well, bluff him, then. It's about the same thing. You turn those jobs over to me. If you tried to commit burglary some one would pick your pocket and steal your jimmy."

Dr. Sinclair interrupted us at this point. "I think we've talked business long enough for one day. It makes us a little feverish, I fear. Just a moment; we'll have a look at our temperature," and he clicked his thermometer into my jaws. Knowlton both winked and grinned at me.

"I'll send the new chemist up to see you in a couple of days, Ted. Give him all our formulas and experiments you can think of. Good luck!" and he was gone.

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Within two or three days I was allowed to come downstairs and sit at the big living-room window, where one could see the sleighs passing up and down Myrtle Boulevard. Helen, with Leonidas at her feet, would sit beside me, and we read or talked or kept silent as the fancy seized us. Miss Hershey discreetly kept in the library, where she alternated embroidering with copious letter-writing. Her correspondents were apparently endless, for fully half her time was occupied with letters. Helen and I used to try to guess their contents; once we found a half finished one on the library table, and it was only by the exercise of the strongest will-power that we resisted the temptation to read it. The handwriting was angular and large, sprawling diagonally across the page: like Miss Hershey, it was conscious of its excellent social connections. Occasionally we indulged in a little teasing at Miss Hershey's expense, but without solving the mystery of her correspondence. One thing we did that horrified her: we bought a scrap book and pasted in all the lurid accounts of the "tragedy" collected from the pages of the *Eagle* and *Evening Star*. Helen was particularly fond of the passage in which she was described as nursing "a scion of the English nobility back from the Valley of the Shadow." We used to read it aloud to Miss Hershey until the latter protested it was sacrilegious. There was also a beautiful map of my laboratory, with dot-

ted lines, foot prints, and two crosses to show where Prospero and I were found.

We also had some correspondence of our own on our hands. There was my family to write to; the cable had already informed them of the accident and my recovery, but we had to tell them all about our engagement and future plans. Helen was shy and diffident about it, nor did I blame her. It was no easy task to write to a mother and sister she had never seen. She studied their pictures a long time before beginning and asked for advice often as she wrote. Then she wouldn't show me the finished letters, and we almost squabbled over it. She got out of it at last by telling me that some of the things she had said about me would make me too conceited. I retaliated by refusing to let her see my letters. All this took the whole of a happy morning.

Although we had delayed formal announcement of our engagement until Mrs. Claybourne's return at Christmas, all Deep Harbor knew it, thanks to the *Eagle*, and every day Helen's friends dropped in to congratulate us and give us good wishes. Every one was friendly and cordial; I felt as if the town had adopted me and now counted me as part of it. Even the Herr Lieutenant Ludwig von Oberhausen made a call, stiffer and more formal than ever, as the importance of the occasion demanded. He was making great headway with the wealthy Miss Greyson, and it was rumoured their engagement would be announced at about the same time as ours.

Soon the doctor gave me permission to go out in the afternoons for a short walk; Helen and I went back and forth on Myrtle Boulevard, all bundled up in wraps and furs, for nearly every day now a screaming north wind blew off the lake. There was snow on the ground, several inches of it, but not so much, Helen said, as there would be after Christmas. The cold was greater than any I had ever experienced, and in my weakened condition I felt it keenly. On some days the air in one's lungs was almost painful; the snow underfoot squeaked annoyingly as one trod upon it. Helen threw

on these sharp days; her cheeks glowed with a rosy tint, and the grey of her eyes took on new depths of color and an added sparkle. I liked to watch an escaped lock of her brown hair blowing across her face as I walked beside her, or to see the radiant health shown by her springing step, her quickly aroused laugh, and her interest in everything that the earth had to offer. On these expeditions Sir Leonidas de la Patte Jaune was our delighted escort. Although no person passed upon the street without turning to smile at his uncouth appearance,—he would not have attracted more attention if he had been a hippogriff,—Sir Leonidas's happy spirit was irrepressible. He had a sniff and a wag for all comers and an abiding faith in the goodness of human nature. Occasionally we dropped in to return calls, stopping here and there at various large piles of rough stone with rounded arches which comprised the architecture of Myrtle Boulevard's newer residences.

On one gorgeous sunshiny afternoon, when the breeze from the lake was like iced champagne, Dr. Sinclair prescribed a sleigh ride, on condition that Helen did the driving. We consulted by telephone my old friends at the "livery and feed" stable, with the result that they delivered at our front door a shiny equipage all bells and fur. It was my first experience with a sleigh, and I was much amused to watch Helen's preparations. She could not have done more had we been planning a dash for the Pole. Hot bricks and steamer rugs were merely preliminaries. I was tucked in like a baby and wrapped up until only my eyes and nose were left visible. All having been done to her satisfaction, this handsome young lady took her seat beside me, and we were off. The motor-car had not as yet become such a common experience as to deaden us for all lesser forms of speed; thus it was that this first sleigh-ride seemed to me a most exhilarating thing. The low seat comparatively close to the ground, and the absence of any noise save for the bells, did much to increase the illusion of rapid motion. No wonder Henry Irving had been struck with the dramatic nature of sleigh bells. I told Helen

about that strange old melodrama, *The Bells*, as we whizzed along our favourite Ridge Road. "We shall go to see Irving together in it next year when we are in London, Ted," she whispered. I thrilled with delight, as I always did whenever Helen referred to the golden future we were to share. We were intensely happy in the present, yet "next year" enshrined everything we really wanted; we looked upon our present, happy as it was, as something of a hand-to-mouth existence. Next year we should begin to live.

"I think I shall take some courses at South Kensington Museum," Helen remarked casually, awakening me from a dream of next year.

"South Kensington—what on earth do you know about it?"

"I've naturally been looking up a few things, Ted dear, about the city where I am to spend the rest of my life—"

"Yes, but what does one study at South Kensington?"

"I'm ashamed of you, Ted—particularly when you've told me about the theatre things to be seen there—costumes and pictures and all the Pre-Raphaelite designs for furnishings. Well, there is also a big technical school, too, and I'm going to study some of these things. I want to be useful, too."

I did not reply immediately. I think it is always a shock to discover that the woman one loves has a practical turn of mind. As a matter of fact, it is the woman who plans life, although the man is not always aware of it.

"Well, Ted, you didn't imagine life was all bread and cheese and kisses, did you?" she broke in upon me. "Of course, if you don't want me to study the things you really like, I won't."

Woman's illogical relentless logic is always unanswerable.

"I'm sorry you took me by surprise, dear," I apologized. "The truth is, I haven't planned our life very definitely."

"Then don't you think it is about time we did?"

I noted the change in pronouns. The horse slowed down to a walk, his breath drifting back from his nostrils like smoke from a dragon.

"I suppose we should," I admitted a little reluctantly. The practical aspects of living I was accustomed to think concerned only the contents of my laboratory. Once I closed that door behind me, I entered another world where no practical matters were ever considered. For the first time I realized that this was a sign of weakness of character. I sat up disturbed at this latter thought. The horse zig-zagged across the road at will.

"Chemistry isn't your real work, Ted—it never will be. You've admitted that a dozen times."

I nodded.

"Not that your chemistry isn't good, as far as your temperament will allow it to be, but there's just the trouble. It ties you to a business routine in which you'll be mediocre. I don't want a mediocre husband, Ted."

"What has all this to do with South Kensington?" I queried, feeling quite uncomfortable. There was a determination and conviction in Helen's tone much at variance with the masculine theory of the clinging vine.

"While we earn our living at chemistry, Ted dear, we must get ready for our real work. That's why I'm going to study at South Kensington."

A light dawned on me. Helen was going to help—to work with me! I was so happy my throat hurt.

"Some day, Ted, you'll write, and we'll make the toy theatre you've told me about real. I shall be able to help you, for I'll learn all I can about costumes and furniture and scenery. And I'm going to read every play ever written!"

For a mile we rhapsodized in wild enthusiasm, building one of the most astonishingly well-equipped castles-in-Spain imaginable. Apart from containing the neatest little country-house and garden, it had also a laboratory and a theatre which was to be the world's center of all important things dramatic. We didn't forget a kennel for Sir Leonidas de la Patte Jaune. Curiously enough, neither of us thought of a nursery. No shadow of doubt crossed our minds that every-

thing we planned would be realized. We had such faith in each other we were certain anything we wished was attainable. We had only to join forces to make the world bow to us. It wasn't conscious conceit; we were humble in our happiness. There were many things in the world which needed doing and doing well; we were merely planning to do our share. We thought of it all as our duty toward life; there was no wish for vainglory—no longing for riches. Indeed, we did already know enough to understand that the things we were going to do were not the things which bring wealth—at least, that it was not the easiest road to financial success. Nevertheless we always had in our minds, as a major premise, sufficient funds for our purposes. This latter assumption it did not occur to us to analyse. We could live by chemistry as we went along.

We returned home to find Miss Hershey and Mr. Claybourne awaiting us with another practical discussion. It was necessary formally to announce our engagement; the question of marriage was to be a subject for later negotiations. My illness and Helen's care of me had, however, rather forced the issue, so that Mr. Claybourne thought it wise to recognize the engagement. Mrs. Claybourne was returning from Asheville specially on this account. So much Mr. Claybourne contributed. Miss Hershey took up the running at this point: she had decided, upon consultation with Mr. Claybourne, to have the engagement announced at a dinner party, to be followed by a dance, on Christmas eve at the country club. What did we think of this arrangement? To tell the honest truth, we neither of us, as we confessed when alone, cared to be the centre of such an elaborate show. To protest was ungracious when intentions were so excellent; with much forcing of our dispositions we appeared delighted. Miss Hershey carried off Helen to make a list of guests; Mr. Claybourne took me into the library. We sat down, I in my usual trepidation when confronted with practical details.

"I have had a letter from your father, Edward," he began, taking out a familiar envelope. I was surprised, for as yet I

had received only a cable of good wishes. "He appears pleased with the step you have taken." I bent my face into a smile. "I have been just a trifle uneasy for fear that his disapproval might affect your future. He is, on the contrary, ready to do what he can to assist."

This time I really smiled—not that I had had any doubt, but it was pleasant to learn of my father's absolute trust in me.

"He is not too encouraging over finances, but seems to think he can give you employment that will enable you to take care of Helen—and of any addition."

"Addition?" I asked, puzzled. Mr. Claybourne looked at me over the rims of his glasses, and tapped his letter on the corner of the table.

"I assume that young married people usually have additions to their family," he said. I blushed furiously.

"Ye-yes," I murmured feebly. "I hadn't thought of that."

"I sometimes wonder, Edward, if you and Helen think of any one but yourselves," he said, gazing out the window. I was stung by this rebuke, perhaps because its truth struck me forcibly. "But I am not surprised; it is entirely natural for young people to be selfish—" I made a gesture of protest, which he ignored. "They think they can make the world over in their own image. Sometimes they forget the world has been in business longer than they have. The point is, however, that in being selfish together you mustn't be selfish to each other. I am glad neither of you have much money, but I also want Helen to be comfortable. That, I conclude from your father's letter, will be the case. The less you have, down to a certain point, the harder you will work for each other. Have you anything to say, Edward?"

I thought, but no ideas occurred to me. I looked around uneasily, wishing Helen were there to back me up.

"I notice, Edward, that you have already formed the habit of leaning on Helen's decisions. I admit that she is a young woman with force of character beyond her years." He smiled slightly, with a reminiscent air. "I'm not always immune myself; your engagement is proof of that," he laughed. "But

I am telling you this for your good, Ted. Be your own boss; Helen will respect you all the more, and so will I. Besides, Edward, it's a pretty important element in success in life."

Again no suitable reply from me was forthcoming. This rather plain hint about "success in life" fitted with the weakness-of-character theory that had come to me upon the Ridge Road earlier in the afternoon. I wondered how true it was. If true, was it curable? Mr. Claybourne seemed to be waiting, for I heard him cough. Helen saved the situation by coming in and sitting on the arm of my chair.

"What have you been saying to Ted, dad?"

"One or two things he ought to know, my daughter," Mr. Claybourne replied gravely.

"That's an awfully unfair advantage to take of any one, dad. Of course Ted didn't know what to say back to you?" she teased, rumpling my hair.

"You are both two ignorant young fools," Mr. Claybourne exploded ungrammatically.

"What else do you expect us to be, dad? Besides, according to Mr. Pope's famous line, it would be silly of us to be anything else. Look it up, dad, in your Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*."

Mr. Claybourne chewed the end off a fresh cigar, obviously in a bad humour.

"Well, Helen, all I can say is that I hope the world won't give you too hard a knock, when it decides to take the conceit out of you. Other people have been in love before," he added with what I thought was irrelevance.

"Of course they have, dad dear. But not just like Ted and me."

Mr. Claybourne uttered a pardonable snort.

"As long as we have each other, nothing can happen to either of us," Helen said simply, in a tone that made me grip her arm tightly.

"As long as—" Mr. Claybourne said slowly to himself without finishing the sentence. A boy stopped outside the window and lit the street lamp. The room was growing dark, and a

new moon was just visible above the opposite roof. There was a long silence, during which Mr. Claybourne puffed at his cigar.

"Why, what a gloom you are, dad, trying to frighten us out of our happiness with all your pessimistic grown-up ideas," Helen cried, flinging her arms impulsively about him, knocking the ash off his cigar, and seriously deranging his dignity. Nevertheless he patted his daughter on the back and was secretly much pleased.

"Well, little girl," he smiled, "getting 'round your old dad just as you always do," and he kissed her.

"Of course!" she laughed. "That's what dads are for."

Even Miss Hershey's meticulously exact explanation, at dinner, of how the lists of guests for the engagement dinner and dance had been selected, together with much family history of the individuals, could not drive away the fit of depression the afternoon had brought me. I had really never thought of the future as something to be approached with dread and suspicion; it had always seemed sufficient to blunder into it gaily and unquestioningly. I had never doubted it could be other than pleasant. Forethought could always prevent tragedies. . . . Could it? If one knew what tragedy to expect—yes; how if there were tragedies that crept upon one unawares? What was it the Bible said about "a thief in the night"? It was the old peril of too much happiness. The whole world was enthralled to this superstition and called its childish fears "commonsense precaution." With this fairly satisfactory and optimistic solution I finally went to bed.

A week before the dinner dance Mrs. Claybourne returned, quite limp from her journey in a Pullman and the onward rush of events at home. She felt utterly discouraged, she said, at the hopelessness of it all, and the general lack of consideration. Helen and I were made to feel like criminals detected in the midst of some clandestine crime. Helen had to have a new evening gown and an afternoon dress; she ought really to have a new set of furs, but that was out of the question, because of

the terrible expense of the dance. Miss Hershey clicked and oozed sympathy from the background. Mr. Claybourne put a stop to his wife's beating of her breast by ordering Helen and her mother to New York to get everything needed.

"You can send the bills to me, and I'll do the worrying up at the office," he finished.

"I think I'll go along and do my shopping in New York, too," I put in, without pausing to think. This produced a renewed outburst. It wasn't proper, was the sum and substance.

"I've got something important to do in New York," I contended stubbornly. "Helen has to have an engagement ring."

Helen and her father took my part. It was better, he thought, for some one to go along who could look after the party and keep Helen amused. Helen simply remarked that the idea I was not to go was preposterous. Besides, the change would do me good. I would come back refreshed and ready to resume work. Mrs. Claybourne yielded, after first fleeing to her room in tears. It was settled I was to go along.

CHAPTER TEN

WE SHARE OUR FIRST CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS EVE was only three days away, bringing with it the formal announcement of our engagement. I received several letters from my father, as well as from my mother and sister. They accepted the situation, but I knew the family well enough to detect considerable uneasiness between the lines. My mother was once or twice frankly doubtful. Did I know America well enough to choose the right type?—a question which made me smile, as I thought of Helen. My sister asked even more feminine questions. What was Helen like? Was she fond of sports? A good sort? Or was she very serious-minded, like so many Americans? My sister, who was much younger than myself, had been born in England and had never set foot in America. I felt a certain difficulty in explaining Helen to her, although I had no doubt the two girls would be good pals on sight. My father was not so disconcerting; yet there was also an undercurrent of doubt and displeasure in his comments. Nothing but taking Helen to England and displaying her there would really straighten this out, I concluded.

Meanwhile I concealed all this from Helen. The family wrote her cordial and welcoming letters. We were busy with our preparations, and the factory was also an inescapable task. Knowlton was remorseless. I received no special favours at his hands in the way of extra time off. After I had quite recovered from my part in Prospero's tragic melodrama, the grindstone was held to my nose again. The young people of Deep Harbor, particularly the girls, took an absorbing interest in Helen and me. It was all so romantic, they said—the horseback riding, the attempt to murder me, and our re-

solution to go abroad. "It is such a consolation for you, my dear," a delicious old lady said to Helen, "that you are going to live in England, for you will always have your own church wherever you go."

Mr. Claybourne, having reached his decision, apparently more or less dismissed us from his mind as much as was possible. I dined on Sundays at the house as a matter of course. Mrs. Claybourne kept up her wailing, as was natural to her temperament. I think she enjoyed having a standing grievance. It saved her the trouble of inventing a fresh one each day. When friends dropped in to talk matters over, a pastime to which Deep Harbor was much addicted, she would burst into tears at each mention of the word "England." What would become of her, with her only daughter over four thousand miles away, she did not know. But of course no one in the house had any consideration for her feelings, she would go on to explain—least of all her own daughter, who seemed actually to be looking forward to the separation. This was not fair to Helen, who loved her father with a passionate devotion and was sympathetically affectionate toward her mother. As a matter of fact, there were times when Helen minded the thought of leaving her family a great deal, and I had, upon those occasions, to paint the future in the brightest possible colours. Not that Helen doubted for an instant the love which had governed our choice. It was the natural reaction of a young girl not yet out of her teens to the realization that her new and unknown life to come would mean the breaking of all her old ties. She felt it more than even her father or her mother seemed to guess.

In the evening we read aloud, a rather sober occupation for two young lovers. Helen was eager to know the books I liked, and I to know hers, while together we explored new fields and made them our own. We were given the back drawing room to ourselves, and there, before a natural gas fire, which was the usual Deep Harbor translation of the Yule log, we would sit on a little sofa, Helen with her feet tucked up under her and her head on my shoulder, while I read. We read hardly any

slush and but little romance, for of the latter we had now enough of our own. We were too young and eager to be at life to have any patience with slush. We did not know its value as an anodyne, for we had no need of anaesthetics of any kind. We wanted to get into life as quickly as possible and fashion it to suit ourselves. We were therefore more interested in Ibsen and Shaw, in Hauptmann and Nietzsche, in William Morris and Anatole France, than in the current novels from the circulating library.

I don't think we were priggish in our seriousness. We kep't our reading to ourselves and never spoke of it to others. We looked upon it as necessary preparatory study before embark-ing together upon our future. We wanted to know, as far as we had time to learn, what writers and thinkers had to say about this world that seemed so beautiful to us. When they were bitter, hard, or cynical, we laughed and pitied them. But most of all we enjoyed the new vistas they revealed, and neither Anatole France nor Nietzsche frightened us one bit. We looked upon a great man's mind as something independent of his experience. That he said life was cruel did not to us imply anything further than an interesting point of view which it was good fun to discuss. We felt sure that William Morris was right and the others wrong. We laughed over Shaw because we could feel him striking into Deep Harbor's vitals—and it amused us, knowing Deep Harbor, to see the skill with which he did it and the latter's blissful unconcern. The Deep Harbor *Eagle* ran a leader one morning to prove Shaw a clown and a mountebank. We were tempted to cut it out and send it to Shaw, but we didn't know his address.

On Christmas eve was to be our dinner and dance at the country club. The country club was situated several miles out of town upon the lake shore. It was a large wooden building of "Colonial" architecture, which means that it had a broad verandah, facing the lake, with high wooden columns in front, walls covered with white shingles, and shutters painted green. You drove out via the west lake road. Its member-

ship was rigidly limited to four hundred, and the dues were absurdly high. Only the financially élite could afford to belong and play upon its tame nine-hole course. It boasted a waiting list of over a hundred names. Sons were put down for it before going away to college, in the hope that they would be elected by the time they had graduated. All the important social functions of Deep Harbor took place there, and some, if gossip were true, not quite so decorous as these.

It was Miss Hershey, the professional chaperone, who had decided upon the country club as the only suitable rostrum from which to announce our engagement. The dinner party was to be a small one, not over twenty couples, and the other young people were to come in later for the dance. The flowers were ordered from Buffalo and the music from Detroit. The chef of the country club was to procure, by means best known to himself, partridges, and a professional caterer was to furnish the ice-cream. All this Miss Hershey was responsible for. She took charge of all arrangements, and Mr. Claybourne, who was a sensible man and hated display, had not a word to say. Least of all were Helen and I allowed to interfere.

At six on the appointed day I reported at the Claybourne residence on Myrtle Boulevard in full regalia, but withal a curious dryness in my throat. Knowlton had dropped in to grin at me while I dressed, and he had completed my nervousness. "To speak your own language," he had said, as I made ready to leave, "what price Deep Harbor, now, old thing?" Knowlton was coming to the dance; Miss Hershey had crossed his name off the dinner list.

"Go to hell, Knowlton," I replied, slamming the door. I could feel his grin following me through the panels all the way downstairs.

At the Claybournes' I found Mrs. Claybourne collapsed in tears upon the sofa, now that she was to face the casting of the die, and Mr. Claybourne bending over her trying to coax her to drink a cocktail which he held in one hand. Still protesting that alcohol always gave her a sick headache, she finally drank it with what I thought rather practised skill. Meanwhile Mr.

Claybourne made violent signs at me to efface myself, which I did by retreating to the back of the passage until Helen should come down. Miss Hershey was out at the country club putting the finishing touches to the table.

Helen appeared at last, in a really grown-up evening gown, a bunch of Parma violets pinned to her bodice. My eyes swam a bit as I went forward to meet her, and my legs were most unsteady.

“Lady Grey Eyes,” I stammered, and clung to her hand. She was much more composed than I. Save for the bright light that danced and sparkled in her eyes, she might have gone through a hundred such affairs.

“Look, Ted,” she whispered. Behind her came Leonidas, new washed and with a small bunch of violets tied by a blue ribbon to his collar. Leonidas sat down and tried to remove the violets with his paws. We both laughed.

“Is he going?” I asked.

“Of course not, you dear idiot,” Helen replied. “But I had to dress him up for the occasion.”

At that moment a carriage arrived containing Miss Hemphill and her escort, and into this Mr. Claybourne bundled Helen and me. He would follow with Mrs. Claybourne later. The ride out to the country club was cold and long. The roads were partly frozen and partly covered with snow. We bumped in and out of ruts and the horses steamed. Inside, however, we were all giggles and laughter. Miss Hemphill and her young man, a clerk in the Deep Harbor Smelting Company, teased us, until we reached the club, with well meant but rather elephantine wit.

Soon after we got there the whole dinner party arrived, and we sat down in a deafening uproar of shrill conversation and laughter. The crowd was composed entirely, with the exception of Mr. and Mrs. Claybourne, of young friends of Helen’s. I was the only non-Deep Harborite present. It seemed a little queer, and once or twice I thought of my father and wondered what he was thinking. Was I really doing the thing he would approve? Then I would look at Helen, and reassurance would

return. No one could possibly disapprove of her. The family would be thankful I had been so lucky. Indeed, my luck was a constant source of wonder to me. How on earth was it possible that Helen should love me? It was beyond reasoning out. And as I pondered this miracle, I could feel Helen's hand steal under the tablecloth and give mine a gentle touch. It was true, then. Once we were caught at this, by the young man on the other side of Helen, and a great to-do of laughter and teasing followed. I was horribly embarrassed that I had put Helen in such a predicament, and a little angry, but she didn't seem to mind the noise at all. How they could talk, those young people! The girls seemed to be screaming, so sharp and shrill were their voices; my ears ached. Every one spoke at once, at the topmost pitch, and no one listened for a reply. I have no idea what it was all about, for I was in such a daze I could neither eat nor make out what was being said. Once or twice Helen said: "Steady, Ted. Try to look cheerful," and I would pull myself together with a smile at her and venture a remark.

After dinner the pandemonium increased with the arrival of those invited to the dance. The orchestra played dance music at what I should have thought an incredible speed. I blundered badly in dancing and left bruises, I fear, on more than one dainty instep. I was at home only when I danced with Helen, but Miss Hershey's etiquette forbade that this should be very often. As hostess Helen had to dance with as many of the young men as possible. Sometimes I lurked gloomy in a corner, disliking the public display of Helen that the party implied. Each time Miss Hershey's watchful eye would ferret me out, and I would be handed over to another young creature.

Dancing in Deep Harbor was a skilful art. The young people of the town approved or condemned newcomers according to the measure of their proficiency on the polished floor. Never did any one earn more deservedly a reputation as an execrable dancer than I did that evening. Some of my partners, I could see, frankly pitied Helen. In Deep Harbor, to marry a man who could not dance, or was a bad dancer, was to hang

a social old-man-of-the-sea about one's neck. It doomed all "good times" as far as that couple were concerned. Hence the genuine pity which I saw in the eyes of some of Helen's friends.

A respite came when Knowlton appeared. After he had danced with Helen, I took him around and introduced him to as many young ladies as I was able to identify. Miss Hershey helped me out with a few names, although I was supposed to know them all. Knowlton's eyes twinkled, and the crows' feet at their corners were crinkled with restrained amusement as I took him through the ceremonies of introduction. We escaped for a few moments for a cigarette in the sun-parlour, a portion of the verandah enclosed with glass in the winter time.

"Well, Ted," he grinned at his cigarette, "I certainly have to laugh when I think of you doing the social honours for me in Deep Harbor. I have to hand it to you, Ted, and I mean this seriously. Miss Claybourne's the best of the bunch. She's an A-number-one winner, and you are a damned lucky kid."

"Thanks, Knowlton; I agree with you."

Knowlton puffed his cigarette reflectively. "It's great to be a kid," he said at length. "I never was," he added rather unexpectedly. "When I ought to have been, I was selling goods and studying to be an engineer, evenings. I'm not kicking; I guess I had a pretty good time—even when I didn't know where the next meal was coming from."

I was silent, for it was most unusual for Knowlton to wax confidential about himself.

"But now that things are beginning to come my way, I see a little what I've missed. I'm getting grey here over the temples, Ted, and I'm doggoned if I don't envy you," he finished with queer irrelevance. We both smoked in silence. It is a difficult matter for two men to say what is on their minds. I liked Knowlton, and I wanted to tell him I did, but I didn't dare try for the words.

"I guess we are none of us, Ted," he went on, "as practical and hard-headed as we make ourselves out to be. I used to think I had no time to bother with women."

"He travels furthest who travels alone," I murmured, rather startled by such a quotation on such an evening.

"It's a mistake, Ted," Knowlton came back. "It isn't true. The fellow who said that was trying to conceal bankruptcy with a little window-dressing."

"Knowlton," I stammered, making a desperate effort, "I—I—"

He cut in on me. "Thanks, Ted. I like you too. Let's let it go at that," and he threw away his cigarette stub and went in to the ballroom. I sat and wondered at the hint of tragedy the always smiling Knowlton had shown me. "After all," I reflected, "he is still young." "Ah, but he is not a kid, don't you see?" my old annoyer Reason interjected. "That's the point." I lit another cigarette. "I wonder why it is great to be a kid?" I asked. Reason was prompt with a reply, "Because kids enjoy everything without stopping to think."

I looked up, to see Helen in the doorway, surrounded by formally attentive swains.

"Ted," said Helen coming up to me. "This is our dance. How could you?"

It was the first time I had ever been conscious of hurting her, and I was truly contrite. I explained about Knowlton as we danced around the room.

"The poor old dear," said Helen. "You would never guess it from those adorable crow's feet of his."

"Knowlton isn't old," I objected, almost shocked.

"Well," Helen went on, "he's almost middle-aged."

But we soon changed the subject, for we had more important things to talk about.

The dance came to an end at last, since there is a limit to the physical endurance of even the youth of Deep Harbor. I was fagged, and, now the excitement had passed, there were deep circles under Helen's eyes. "Take me home, Ted," she whispered, and with infinite craft and skill, we eluded Miss Hershey and got a carriage to ourselves.

We sat for a long time in silence, as we bounced over the ruts, her hand resting in mine.

"It is Christmas day, dearest," I bent over her and said. She looked into my eyes.

"Our first Christmas together, Ted. How many will there be?" Suddenly there came a little catch in her voice, and she cried against my shoulder, as if frightened. I comforted her, and she again looked up, a smile coming through wet eyes.

"Christmas. We'll never forget, will we Ted?"

We looked out at the arc lamps of Deep Harbor ahead. On the left, the frozen, snow-covered lake looked like some strange continent of the moon in the glowing light. The fields and vineyards were dimly white, with dark patches showing. The snow had been thinned by a thaw. We looked together, now ahead, now left, now right, that we might impress the scene on our memories forevermore. It was very still save for the rattle of the carriage and the occasional voice of the driver speaking to his horses. Far on the other side of the town the flare of a Bessemer steel works suddenly lit up the sky, for its furnaces never rested, day or night.

I kissed her good-night at her door and walked down Myrtle Boulevard, in the dawn, alone. At my rooms I found a letter from my father, together with a generous check. "Buy Helen a Christmas present out of this," was his only comment on sending me the money. I could not sleep, but the factory was to be shut down on Christmas Day, so the loss of sleep did not matter. The future stood before me like an impenetrable wall. I wanted to see the other side. It seemed absurd, preposterous, that one couldn't fathom that mystery. It was not fair to make one face life without knowing what to expect. Of what use were hopes or plans, if out of that void some unforeseen thing struck at one? Yet fear, I knew, was more deadly than any blow that could come from the dark. One must grope ahead, like a child going into a cellar, but if one feared the dark, then the thing would become intolerable. It would add terrors that were not there and deprive one of the power to deal with the things that were.

What was it Helen had asked? How many Christmas days would there be for us? Granting three score and ten as the

limit, there should be not less than fifty such days. Fifty times to remember all that today meant to us. "I wonder why most stories stop when they are married?" I asked myself. "Don't they dare tell the rest of it?" Reason refused to make any comment, for Reason, too, was baffled by that mystery of the future.

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Christmas dinner was a solemn family function held at three o'clock in the afternoon. Besides Helen, Mrs. Claybourne, Mr. Claybourne, and me, there were Helen's Uncle Peter, from Dayton, Ohio, and his wife. Uncle Peter and Aunt Ethel had come to Deep Harbor with a double motive—to spend Christmas and to inspect the potential nephew-in-law. Uncle Peter was affable and jocose, slightly older than his brother, Mr. Claybourne, but similar in type. He had not quite the same force of character or skill in business, I decided after hearing one of his anecdotes. Anecdotes are a sore betrayer of man's mental make-up. They should be told only by persons who have nothing to fear from self-revelation. Aunt Ethel was a woman of firmness and impregnable self-complacency. "In Dayton we—" was her regular introduction to the simplest statement. She wore gold-bowed invisible glasses and had pastry-coloured hair. Of the two I immediately plumped for Uncle Peter and his anecdotes. They were more reassuring than Aunt Ethel's views upon conduct.

Mrs. Claybourne had marvellously recovered from the day before. She was in a mood as closely approximating the cheerful as one could expect. In fact, I had never before seen her thus close to having a good time. The shortcomings of Jane, the maid, seemed the only flies in her ointment. These were gone over rather thoroughly with Aunt Ethel, but were mostly out of the way by the time we sat down to dinner. According to Helen, Jane was a treasure who survived endless faultfinding and nagging with the patience of a saint; in Mrs. Claybourne's account, she was a wilful conspirator against the tidiness, peace, and happiness of the whole house. The fact

that Jane had been with the Claybournes three years seemed to me evidence in favour of Helen's version.

The dinner was truly marvellous. There is no other word to express it. Mr. Pickwick never fared better at Dingley Dell. Such turkeys as America produces do not grow again until heaven is reached. Before a fine specimen of this delectable bird was eaten on this day, Uncle Peter, rather vigorously prompted by Aunt Ethel, said grace. Uncle Peter spoke the kind of grace that one makes up as one goes along, and he landed himself in a sentence from which there was no retreat, either forward or backward. Just as Helen mischievously and irreverently kicked me on the shin under the table, Uncle Peter cut the Gordian knot of his rhetoric by a loud "Amen." My laugh, therefore, did no damage to the proprieties. Helen and I were too light-hearted and hungry to be abashed by any amount of family. Excitement had spoiled our appetites on the day before, but now there was no stopping us. We laughed so loudly at Uncle Peter's anecdotes that he gave himself an encore on several of them, and we clearly were his firm friends. Our plates went back for turkey and cranberry sauce again and again. Mr. Claybourne produced his champagne and ran through all his favourite toasts. Mrs. Claybourne smiled at least three times. Aunt Ethel declined champagne with great firmness, and her eye upon Uncle Peter noticeably reduced the quantity he would have drunk. He had to snatch it in nervous sips when his wife seemed most engaged. He was, therefore, always a glass behind Mr. Claybourne and me. I grew reckless enough, in spite of a severe shin kick from Helen, to propose Aunt Ethel's health. Uncle Peter enthusiastically seconded me, seeing a chance to get down a whole glass, and Mr. Claybourne joined in. Aunt Ethel was compelled to acknowledge the compliment with rather a frigid bow, and I gathered that "we in Dayton" didn't drink many toasts in champagne.

After dinner Uncle Peter forced one of his black cigars upon me and imperilled all the structure of good feeling the dinner had built up in me. Deep Harbor gave me many opportunities to curse the proximity of the island of Cuba to the United

States. In spite of the cigar, Helen and I skipped away, under a volley of Uncle Peter's winks, and sat down to talk things over.

"Do you feel any more engaged than you did yesterday?" I asked.

Helen smiled and turned over the pages of a book I had given her. "Yesterday," she replied, "the family tolerated us, but really ignored the fact of our engagement. Today they regard it as something that has actually happened—and all because we sat at table with a lot of friends and told them what they knew already."

"The world, it appears to me, is conducted by a series of meaningless ceremonies," I remarked in my wise manner. "It will be the same over our marriage. Nothing could make us mean any more to each other than we do now—but the family will attach great importance to the marriage."

"Don't be silly, Ted," said Helen,—unexpectedly, to me, taking the side of convention. "Of course they will. We have to be married."

"I'm not arguing against it," I said, and Helen gently slapped me. "But I wonder why?"

"My mother," Helen answered simply, "has a genuine belief in the ceremony of the church. To her, marriage is a sacrament."

"And what do you think?" I queried.

Helen looked out of the window thoughtfully. "I don't know, Ted dear. I felt it was a sacrament when I opened my eyes, after the horse fell with me, and I found you holding me in your arms. I know then that nothing on earth could make us belong any more to each other than we did then. I think that would have been all I should have asked—just to know you loved me."

"That is all I want to know, Helen dear," I said, taking her in my arms. "But of course we shall get married according to the rules."

"You delicious idiot," Helen laughed, "of course we shall. Can you imagine Deep Harbor, if we didn't?"

The prospect was dazzling to the imagination. Miss Hershey and the daily *Eagle* between them—I laughed at the thought.

“I wouldn’t do anything to hurt dad,” Helen added softly, and I again held her close.

“I was only moralizing on this question of ceremonies, Helen precious,” I whispered. “It has always amazed me that people attach such great value to them. I suppose it is, after all, because ceremonies have to be public, and they are thus a public acknowledgement of assumed obligations.”

“If the church means anything to you, then its sanction must be a tremendous comfort,” Helen mused. “I sometimes wish I knew what I believed, don’t you, Ted?”

“I am trying to find out, but I don’t know. Sometimes I think chemistry is the key to the mystery—and then it isn’t. Chemistry didn’t make your grey eyes, sweetheart. There is a Helen in them that no chemistry made.”

“I don’t think chemistry made Ted, either,” she smiled shyly. “For if it did, he would be more logical.”

“There’s a nasty knock in that somewhere, young lady,” I said in mock anger, “but I’m blest if I know where it is.”

“I never know,” she came back inconsequentially, “whether I love you more when you don’t think, or when you tangle yourself up in whimsies trying to think.”

“Neither of us has the faintest idea what truth is”—I began, preparing another disquisition. She cut me short: “No, Ted, we haven’t. We begin life with just one certain fact and no more.”

“What is that certain fact?” I asked.

“Can you ask, Ted? We love each other—that’s all we know.”

“It’s enough,” I said, kissing her mouth. She smiled at me, her face close.

“We’ll begin with that, Ted darling.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WE SEEK AND OBTAIN CONSENT

DURING that winter and early spring the business, under Knowlton's shrewd management, was making good progress. It was clear that, although it would take a much greater investment of capital to turn the factory into a producer of fortunes, nevertheless the plant was now on the way to becoming a steady income-maker for its owners. Knowlton thought it might be possible to get local capital and expand; he exchanged several letters and cables with my father in London on the subject. One day authorization came to him to go ahead.

"That will be one of your jobs, Ted," he remarked to me one evening in my room, as he tossed over my father's cable for me to read.

"What will?" I asked.

"Going around and talking to our local magnates. They are all your social friends out at the country club. Let's see what your friends are worth to you," and he grinned one of his favourite grins.

"H'm," I said, studying the cable. "What have we got to put up to them?"

"Listen to Teddy," shouted Knowlton, chuckling. "Talking like a regular business man! You wouldn't have used that language six months ago."

"I am beginning to pick up a few scraps of the vernacular," I retorted, a little nettled. Knowlton grinned number two grin. He proceeded to lecture me on the present merits and future possibilities of our company. It was all to be put down in black and white for me to study, with what he called "the best talking points" underlined.

"Go after them hard," he advised at the conclusion. "Don't take 'no' for an answer, and don't be afraid of their questions. We are as promising-looking an outfit as there is in town. Why, they ought to swing this thing for us as a matter of local pride. We'll bring money to the place."

"Since we are making a fairly good thing of it as we stand, why not leave well enough alone?" I queried by way of final objection.

"My boy, it can't be done. If you try to stand still, you only slide down hill. It's a law of business. Get on or get out—that's our American jungle law. Besides, it's a question now of obeying the old man's orders."

"You mean my father?" I suggested.

Knowlton grinned: "I beg your pardon. It's our master's voice."

I got up and hunted for my tobacco. "The devil with you, Knowlton, is that every time I begin to imagine everything is all right, you have some infernal new anxiety to thrust under my nose."

"Shove your pipe under it instead and shut up," he laughed. "That's life, my boy. You can't sit it out in a rocking chair. If you try, they take away the front porch from under you when you aren't looking."

I filled my pipe and studied Knowlton's face as I did so. It came to me with a start that I had been taking him for granted for several months now. I no longer analysed him, or tried to, as I had done at first. Suppose Knowlton was not himself on the square and I had been careless? The idea was disturbing. There he sat, characteristically enough, with his legs crossed, the tips of his fingers together, a big cigar in his mouth, and his sharp eyes puckered at the corners with crows' feet. He was oblivious to my scrunity, for he was turning over the new proposition in his mind. He could day dream in arithmetic as a poet could upon hearing the song of a lark. His face was hard, but there was a rugged honesty in it, a touch of the old Scots' stock from which he sprang, with the superimposed

keenness and alertness of the trail-following American. Besides, I remembered his confidences to me that Christmas Eve out at the country club. He too was a sentimentalist—and such as we, who are sentimentalists, are apt to be dishonest only to ourselves or to those we love; the money form of dishonesty is abhorrent to an emotional man. Knowlton was of the common type who masked deep feeling by an outward hard glamour of efficiency. I must have gone on too long staring at him, for he suddenly turned around with a slight narrowing of the eyes.

"Wondering if I am big enough for the job, Ted?" he asked casually, as he tried to remedy the faulty burning of his cigar. "I wondered it about you. It's only fair for you to have your turn," he went on.

"I don't know," I answered. "I don't know whether either of us is. It's a big responsibility we are starting out to face."

"Everything is. It's a responsibility to buy a basketful of hot dogs and sell them at a street corner. It might rain," he countered.

"I know," I laughed. "Hotspur said the same thing."

"Shakespeare again?"

I nodded. He suddenly laid down his cigar. "By God, Ted," he exclaimed, "were you thinking I might not be on the square?"

I hesitated for a second, puzzled. Either he was a very clever man, or—I did not know what to think.

"You once told me to take no one for granted," I fumbled slowly, "if it was a question of business. There were to be no exceptions, you said." I saw the twinkle gathering in the corners of his eyes. "I've known you, Knowlton, nine months, but I don't know very much about you."

He laughed long and loud. "That's having a man's teaching come home and howl on his own doorstep!" he laughed. "Sometimes, Ted, I think you are the biggest damn fool I ever knew, and then you'll do something else, and I say, 'No, cuss it all, the boy has brains after all.'"

"Meaning that now I am in the damn fool stage?" I snorted, rather irritated. He had a way of making one feel as if he held one in his hand.

"It penetrates," he shouted. "The boy is getting intelligent again," and he laughed some more. "Ted," he said, growing instantly serious, "since I earned my first dollar, you are the only man who has ever to my face doubted my honesty." He went off into a laugh again. "And to think," he roared, "that I promised myself that I'd bust the first one who did on the nose."

I pulled at my pipe, waiting for him to finish. I was conscious of an unpleasant glow at the back of my neck.

"Ted, you raised this issue. Let's have it out." I waved my pipe deprecatingly. "No, sir," he went on, "you asked for a dog fight. We'll have one. Have you ever studied the books of the company?"

"No," I muttered. "It wouldn't do me any good if I did. I don't know bookkeeping."

A trace of a grin returned to his face. "Well, you can hire chartered accountants to do it for you," he said. "If ever you do look at them, you will discover that I am a salaried man and haven't one penny interest in this company except the professional one of making good on a job."

I was out of my depth and lacked the technical vocabulary to make a suitable reply.

"Now, Ted, if we do put over this new proposition, all it will mean to me will be a letter of thanks from your father. I mean, legally speaking, I'll have no special claims for anything I do. I have no financial interest at stake except the purely human one of making a good job a better one."

I got up and held out my hand. "I'm sorry, Knowlton."

His old grin returned as he took my hand. "It's all right, kid," he said. "I'm glad you're learning."

Deep Harbor I suspected to be a difficult spot in which to do new financing. Probably our absentee ownership would be a

handicap. I went first to Mr. Claybourne to ask his advice. He received me in his little office, which was upstairs in his own factory. His face grew serious as he listened to me, and I saw him watching a switch-engine through the window.

"I don't know, Ted," he said at length, after my story was done. "I'll be frank with you. This isn't the time to think of you as a future son-in-law. We are talking now about Deep Harbor and business. We don't know much about you. The company is directed from London. We don't like that. On the grounds we have you and Knowlton. Now I dare say you are all right as a chemist, Ted—out in your laboratory. But you don't know any more about American business than a babe unborn."

"That leaves Knowlton," I suggested.

"Yes, that leaves Knowlton," he echoed. "Knowlton is a salaried man. He has no financial interest in your concern. Supposing some one offers him a bigger salary and he ups and leaves you. Where would you be?"

"Knowlton?" I gasped incredulously. "Leave us?"

"It has happened," said Mr. Claybourne drily. "And after all, why not? Why should Knowlton stick with you, if he can make more somewhere else?"

"But—but loyalty," I protested, "good faith—a dozen things make it out of the question!"

Mr. Claybourne shook his head slowly. "Ted, you are going to get some hard knocks some day. The world isn't run the way you think it is. And I don't mean any discredit to Knowlton, either. It would only be sound sense for him to jump at a better offer."

My faith in Knowlton was unshaken, but I turned Mr. Claybourne's words over in my mind. "If that is an objection," I said at last, "I'll cable my father to give Knowlton an interest in the business."

"You ought to have done that long ago," replied Mr. Claybourne. "Well, Ted, I'm sorry I can't encourage you. Coming to dinner tonight?"

From Mr. Claybourne's factory I walked straight to the tele-

graph-and-cable office. "Do it now, as Knowlton would say," I smiled to myself as I walked along the street. It was quite a different thing for me to walk along Deep Harbor's streets now from what it had been the first few months. It almost seemed as if half the persons I met knew me. "Hello, Ted!" passing men would call with cheery friendliness—from the barber at the Otooska House to the president of the country club, I was "Ted." Young ladies waved friendly hands at me from front porches, or would ask after Helen as I went by. It was a curiously intimate town, where men often fought each other bitterly in business and played golf together afterwards at the country club. We had no secrets from each other, and the young people wandered in and out of each other's homes and into clubs. It was a frightfully public way to live, and yet not unpleasant.

There was a special free masonry among the men. They knew each other's financial standing and bank account down to the last cent. They also knew each other's business capacity and reliability with astounding accuracy. One heard at the club startlingly frank revelations about all that was going on, and nothing that happened remained long unknown or undiscussed. There were some things talked about which did not reach the ears of the women—whom So-and-so visited on his last trip to New York, for example. The men knew and laughed at much that their code kept from their wives. On the whole, Deep Harbor was a reasonably moral place, in spite of much cocktail drinking and free and easy manners. But there were a few notorious exceptions. And others, less notorious, indulged in occasional flings in distant towns. I never heard of any "prominent citizen" who kept a double establishment in Deep Harbor. A double life there meant a train journey. An actual local scandal was a six months' wonder and carried with it almost complete ostracism to boot. We had had a few famous divorces, but none during my time.

I was thinking of all this as I walked to the telegraph office on State Street. The greetings along the way had started me on my train of thought. I was a long time wording my cable

to my father and still longer reducing it to a business code. A cable or telegram in plain language was not advisable. Deep Harbor knew everything, even the secrets you sent or received by wire. I had been casually questioned more than once about sending messages in code. One advantage of so thoroughly transparent a glass house was that no one cared particularly about casting stones. The infinite gossip of the men, while frank and outspoken in its opinions, was rarely malicious. It was simply that a naked truth, deprived of the last fig leaf, circulated concerning every one.

"All right, Mr. Jevons," said the telegraph girl, as she took my coded message. "Charge it to the company?"

"No—personal," I answered. Knowlton had a way of making me account for every cable. A company cable had to have a copy filed at the office.

"Shall I 'phone an answer out to the Claybournes?" she asked, as if it were a perfectly ordinary matter for her to have an intimate knowledge of my evening movements.

"Yes," I said, for one got accustomed to Deep Harbor's ways, "but make certain you give the reply to me in person. Do not leave a message or 'phone it to any one else in the house."

I took the electric car out to the factory to report to Knowlton.

"Claybourne is rather pessimistic," I began.

"He would be," said Knowlton. "He doesn't want to make himself personally responsible for your campaign. If he were first in, it would commit him to us as a venture which he was backing. Almost too bad you are to be his son-in-law. It ties his hands."

I said nothing about Mr. Claybourne's real objections.

Mr. Claybourne left early after dinner, as was his custom, to play bridge at the club. Mrs. Claybourne knitted in the front room, and Helen and I had thus our evening to ourselves. Leonidas curled up on a goatskin rug and snored while we alternately talked and read. Spring was coming on, although

April, with its cold winds off the lake, was not very spring-like. But the approach of spring made us look forward more definitely to a possible date for our marriage. So far I had not been able to gain my father's permission either to return to England or to set an actual date for the wedding. He hoped that it could be arranged by mid-summer. Beyond that, he refused to commit himself. Helen thought June, as the most conventional time, would probably please her mother best. Already Mrs. Claybourne was threatening to go to the coast of Maine at the end of June and carry Helen with her. We knew that nothing but a definite date could forestall this plan. We figured that we could almost live upon my salary, but there were practical difficulties in the way of taking temporary quarters, if we were going to England soon afterwards. We were therefore a little reluctant to defy matters and get married at once. At least, so Helen's commonsense concluded. We could not afford to quarrel with either family, and a matter of a few extra weeks seemed hardly worth general displeasure. I agreed with Helen, chiefly because it never occurred to me to disagree with her. We were each so sure of the other's love that we did not pass through those agonies of suspense, petty jealousies, and quarrels that seem to be, according to novels, the stock-in-trade of lovers' conduct. We were simply, insanely, and also calmly happy. We lived in our own world, allowed no one across its threshold, and never dreamed of stepping outside it ourselves. Leonidas alone was privileged to share our bliss.

As we sat and talked in whispers of the days to come, the telephone bell rang. It was a cable from my father, and, like mine, in code. The girl at the other end spelled it out to me while Helen wrote it down. At last we had it all, and it was a fairly long one. I walked into the hall to get my copy of the code book, and discovered that I had left it at the telegraph office. Helen scolded me soundly, for our evening was spoiled. It meant that I had to go back down town after the book, and it

would then be too late to return. There was nothing for it but to go.

The girl at the office was quite sorry for me. She had found and kept my book.

"You might have sent it out by messenger," I said reproachfully.

"I thought of it, Mr. Jevons," she said, "but I didn't know if you would want it that bad. A messenger costs thirty cents."

"Yes," I agreed, "but some evenings are priceless."

With this rather flat remark, I left her. I went home to decode the message at my leisure. Another postponement awaited me there, for I found Knowlton ensconced in my study, reading one of my books, his feet upon my table. He came and went as he pleased at my rooms, an arrangement to which I had never objected. But I could not tell him about my father's cable until I knew what answer I had received. If my father refused my suggestion, obviously I could not let Knowlton know anything about it. He sat and talked until well past midnight, while the unread cable burned a hole in my pocket.

"By the way," said Knowlton suddenly, "a cable came through for you this evening. Anything in it?"

"From the family," I replied, mentally damning Deep Harbor's skill in publicity. "But how did you know?"

Knowlton grinned. "I happened to be sending a telegram, and the young lady with the auburn hair mentioned that she had just 'phoned one out to you at the Claybournes'. In code, she said. It was all by way of making conversation, Ted. She thought I'd be interested to know. I'll bet she knows the day I leave off my flannels and put on my summer underwear," Knowlton added, with his trenchant vulgarity. He got upon his feet, stretched himself, and said good-night. I saw him to the door and well on his way to the Otooska House, and then returned to my code book. It was a slow job. Each word in the code stood for either a phrase or a complete sentence. I

had to look each one up in the book and then fit the meanings together, bit by bit, like a mosaic. At last the whole was clear. I could hardly believe my eyes. Here is what I saw:

"Good offer received for sale of business. Cancel any subscriptions of local capital. Give K. five per cent bonus net proceeds above salary. Necessary papers follow first mail. T [that meant me] sail England August first. Bring H."

And all because I was such a blithering, blistering idiot as to leave my code book at the telegraph office, Helen missed hearing the good news that night. Twice my hand reached for the telephone, and twice I paused. I couldn't call Helen up at one-thirty in the morning, not even to tell her she was to be married in July. At least, I couldn't with Mrs. Claybourne in the house. It would have meant an all-night session of hysterics, I felt sure, and I had to spare Helen that. But I could tell Knowlton! I grabbed the telephone and demanded the Otooska House until the central operator must have thought there was a madman at the other end. At last I heard Knowlton's sleepy voice.

"What the hell is it, Ted? Factory on fire or Prospero's ghost haunting you?"

"Neither," I shouted at him. "I'm going to be married."

"Great God, kid, are you drunk?" he came back. "Go to bed and let a man sleep. It's a dirty joke getting me up at this hour."

"It's the cable from father—I've decoded it."

"Hello," his voice came sharper. "I knew darned well you were lying to me earlier in the evening. What is it?"

"The business has been sold," I said, waiting to hear what the effect would be.

There was a moment's pause; then his voice came steady. "I'm glad to hear it, kid. I guess that means your uncle Dudley is out of a job."

"No, it doesn't," I cut in, a little regretful that I had teased him. "I'm instructed to pay you a bonus of five per cent of the net proceeds over and above your salary. Looks as if my father thought enough of you to put you on something else."

There was another pause—so long a one that Central almost cut us off.

"Listen, kid," came Knowlton's voice, when vigorous protests from us both had restored connection again. "What did you cable your father early this afternoon?"

"None of your darned business," I replied. "How did you know I cabled him?"

"The auburn haired little bird whispered it to me when she told me about the reply that came." I could almost feel Knowlton's grin travelling over the wire to me. "What did you say?"

"It's a long story. I'll tell you in the morning."

I heard him laugh. "You won't be at the factory in the morning."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because you'll be out on Myrtle Boulevard telling some one the big news."

"Honest?" I said. "I can have the morning off?"

"Say," he came back, "for gosh' sake cut out this me-the-boss stuff. I don't give a darn if you never come out again. Yes, I do; I'll take that back. You'll tell me some time tomorrow what you cabled your father, or I'll sit on the door step at Myrtle Boulevard until I find out. Seriously, kid, one day off, then we get things in shape to turn the works over. No Norwood stunts for us. It'll be a healthy, going concern. August, did you say? That gives us three months clear. Put your back in it and give my love to Helen in the morning," and he hung up the receiver with a crash in my ear.

I thought sleep was going to be impossible that night, but about four o'clock, as my mind seemed in a perfect welter which defied all efforts at reduction to order, I fell into a dreamless slumber. It was after eight when I awoke, with a curse at myself for forgetting to set the alarm. After a hasty shower and omitting breakfast I dashed out Myrtle Boulevard as rapidly as decorum permitted. I arrived a little after nine.

Mr. Claybourne had already gone to his office. Mrs. Claybourne was anything but pleased to see me at that hour. Her forehead was still adorned with one or two iron clamps in which her hair was tightly wound. I tried to get past her to call for Helen. Mrs. Claybourne was firm. Helen was assisting Jane with the house work, and I was on no account to disturb her. Besides, I ought to be out at the factory at work, like other sensible men. It was bad enough my calling every night. If I was to be underfoot in the morning, too, things might just as well stop where they were. There was a limit to a mother's patience. She was accustomed to the fact that neither Helen nor I ever showed her the slightest consideration, but there was a bound set up by decency which no one had a right to cross, and that bound she would defend at all costs.

Not for anything would I have told her the object of my call, until Helen had first heard the news, and I was ruefully considering going home and telephoning Helen, when this young lady herself stuck her head over the banisters.

"What in the world, Ted, are you quarrelling with mother for just after breakfast? Come upstairs and be scolded at once."

Mother let out a shocked "Helen! The rooms aren't done!" but I bounded by her and upstairs before Mrs. Claybourne could clutch me. Helen looked adorable in a boudoir cap with little pink roses on it and a Japanese kimono that trailed on the floor.

"Well," she said with mock severity, "what do you mean, sir, by forcing your way into the house in this fashion?"

Belowstairs Mrs. Claybourne was repeatedly ordering me to come down. I wondered how long I dared ignore her.

"Helen," I gasped, "I must see you alone—my father's cable—the best news—urgent."

Helen caught my arm, and the strength of her grasp surprised me. "Ted—you don't mean?—is it true?"

"Yes," I choked, "as soon as we can make all arrangements."

She planted a sudden kiss square on my mouth just as Mrs.

Claybourne toiled to the top of the stairs, in breathless and exasperated pursuit.

"Helen, I'm surprised at you—and at Edward. You are not properly dressed—go to your room at once."

By way of reply, Helen did the most surprising thing. She deliberately kicked as high as the rather tight kimono would permit, threw her arms around her mother's neck, and, frantically kissing her, bore Mrs. Claybourne heavily to ground in a sitting posture on top of a cedar clothes chest. I had never seen Helen before in a reckless state of high spirits. Mrs. Claybourne energetically fought off her daughter's embraces.

"Helen Claybourne," she exclaimed, "don't you dare tell me that you and Edward are going to be married. I won't hear it!"

"We are, mother, we are!" cried the excited child, and flung her arms about me, leading me around the hall in a wild and undignified dance. I feebly protested, fearing at least double-woman-power hysterics from Mrs. Claybourne. But "mother" was made of sterner stuff when it came to a pinch. Her lips narrowed to an ominous straight line as she got upon her feet.

"Helen," she commanded in a changed tone of voice. "Go to your room! Your father will deal with you presently. Edward, you will oblige me by leaving my house instantly!"

Helen released me, for we saw that, in the phraseology of Deep Harbor, Mrs. Claybourne "meant business." I bowed and started downstairs. I looked back at Helen from the landing, and over her mother's shoulder I saw her mouth form silently the word "dad." I took the hint, going straight to Mr. Claybourne's office as rapidly as I could get there.

I rather precipitately upset the office boy's theory of etiquette and literally banged into his office. He was talking over the telephone with a serious face. I realized that "mother" had beaten me in reaching him, thanks to the curse of the modern machine.

"Sit down, Edward, and keep quiet," he commanded, adding through the mouthpiece, "Yes. He's here. He has just come."

After what seemed an hour, although it was only a few minutes, he hung up the receiver. Not by a single word had he indicated his own state of mind, but the look upon his face made me most uneasy.

"Ted, you and Helen both show a strange lack of appreciation for a mother's point of view," he began, and I thought, "O Lord, I'm in for a sermon on filial conduct." "I grant you mother is very nervous and difficult to handle, but a little show of affection, a little tact even, would work wonders."

We sat in silence for a moment. I felt rather uncomfortable.

"What possible excuse have you," he went on, "for going out to my house early in the morning and upsetting Helen's mother when I wasn't there?"

"I wished to see Helen. I've had an important cable from my father, and I didn't stop to think of anything else."

He adjusted his glasses carefully. "No," he said, "you and Helen never stop to think of any one but yourselves. Show me your father's cable."

I laid my copy before him. He read it slowly, turning it over once or twice. Then he handed it back to me.

"I suppose it is useless to ask you to wait until Helen is twenty-one," he said, peering at me over his glasses.

"Quite," I answered firmly, for I began to feel it was time we spoke for ourselves and ceased to play children to please the family.

"I suppose you know that in this state a minor has to have the consent of her parents before she can be married?" he said, still looking steadily at me.

"Yes." I spoke rather impudently. "Helen and I looked up the law for ourselves. But there is another state not far away where eighteen is the legal age."

"You will do me a favour if you do not speak in that tone." It was not often that he spoke sharply.

"I beg your pardon," I apologized. "Helen and I intend to get married—that's all I meant to imply."

"Ted"—he relaxed just a little—"when I gave my consent to your engagement, I did so with the understanding that you

two children loved each other and intended to marry. I am sorry, more sorry than I can tell you or than either of you would understand, that it has happened when Helen is so young. Only last year she was at school," and he looked out the window at the dusty street. "I want my daughter to be happy—" he paused. "There isn't a great deal of happiness to be found in this world, Ted. I want her to have her share—that's all." Once more he paused. "As for the date of the wedding, you must settle that with Helen's mother. Your father expects you in August?"

"Yes, sir," I replied, getting to my feet.

"I suppose that means it will have to be the end of July. Ted, you are asking a great deal of me—she's all the happiness I have." He looked around at his office. "I've never refused her anything she's asked—if I could give it her. I shan't now," and he held out his hand. I could think of nothing to say, except silly-sounding words, so I said nothing, but took his hand.

"I think I can trust her to you, Ted—that's all I'll say about you, and I could hardly say more," he added. "I've got to clear up the morning's mail. And Ted, when you come out to dinner tonight—be as nice as you know how to Helen's mother. Tell Helen, too. It will pay."

"Mr. Claybourne—," I stammered, turning at the door.

"Don't try to say it, Ted," he called cheerily from his desk. "I guess I know. I love Helen, too." He pretended to write as if a matter of urgency were before him. I watched him for a moment more, cursing words for their feebleness, and went.

I called Helen up from the nearest telephone pay-station to give her a summary of her father's talk, but again I had been forestalled. He had talked to his daughter direct from his desk, as soon as I left. A few words only, but he had told her it was "all right." Meanwhile, it seemed, "mother" had issued an ultimatum that I was not to be admitted to the house again. It would be necessary for me to come in through the kitchen, Helen giggled over the telephone, or else to climb over the railing of the side porch. There was no use in my coming

at all until her father returned at dinner-time. We agreed to make the best of our temporary separation.

I went next to Knowlton's office.

"Have you set the day?" he grinned, as I entered.

"Don't be an ass, Knowlton," I answered, taking the visitor's chair.

"How's 'mother'?" he went on, ignoring my admonition. "Did she raise the roof?"

I laughed, for Knowlton had an annoyingly successful way of disarming one's dignity by hitting upon the exact truth. We went into a minute examination of the company's affairs, after this preliminary. Or rather Knowlton explained while I listened. The stock was held by a small group of men, of whom my father was the principal and the majority stockholder. Selling the company was, therefore, a simple matter of the transfer of the stock to a new owner. We had neither bonds nor mortgages, and we had paid off our indebtedness to the bank in March. Our business was showing a healthy growth, and the ultimate value of our chemical patents would be considerable, if additional capital were put up for development work. As Knowlton said: "At any price within reason, this outfit is a damned good buy."

Until further letters and papers arrived, we had, of course, no knowledge of who the new owners were to be.

"Well," remarked Knowlton, at the end of his summary, "our little job in Deep Harbor is nearly over. Remember how you hated to come out here? It isn't such a bad place, is it? Old Hélène, Prospero's gymnastic friend, wasn't so far wrong when she said 'Home is where you find it,' eh, Ted?"

I nodded in agreement. I couldn't talk about things I felt the way he could. Once more he grinned. "Now, Ted. What did you cable your father yesterday?"

Briefly I told him of my talk with Mr. Claybourne and the latter's suggestion that, as Knowlton had no interest in the business, he might leave us. Knowlton's face clouded when I had ended my story.

"So Claybourne told you I might play the skunk and leave you flat, eh?"

I tried to soften this epitome of Mr. Claybourne's remarks. After a second or two, Knowlton's grin returned.

"It would be plain murder to leave you in Deep Harbor with a factory on your hands. No, sir, you can always count on six months' notice from me, if you need it. And under the circumstances I won't touch a cent of your father's bonus. He's sending it under false pretences."

I had much argument to convince Knowlton that we were not doubting his good faith. It was simple justice, I explained. The company owed everything to his ability and good service, from the time he discovered that Norwood had sold us a rather prettily plated gold brick to the success which out of all difficulties had since been achieved. We ended with a compromise: he would himself send my father a complete statement of the matter from his point of view, and if, after that, my father thought the bonus earned, then it would be accepted.

"I'm not going to push good money out into the yard, Ted," he concluded. "All I want to know first is whether or not it's mine. You meant well, but you may have given your father the idea I'm trying to hold you people up."

That evening Mr. Claybourne himself opened the door for me when I rang.

"Come right in, Ted," he greeted me cheerfully. "Don't worry if mother doesn't act very pleased to see you. We'll bring her around in time."

Once inside, I found Mrs. Claybourne sitting red-eyed upon the sofa, flanked by Miss Hershey on one side and Helen on the other. The air was slightly electrical; I walked gingerly for fear of touching something off. From Helen's eyes mischief gleamed as she sent a welcoming smile in my direction.

At dinner the next subject was not mentioned. Mrs. Claybourne steadily refused food; otherwise we all tried to act as if nothing unusual was toward. Helen sat next me, and her

foot played a silent and sympathetic tattoo upon mine all through the meal. Mr. Claybourne read the evening paper, or pretended to. Miss Hershey gave an occasional sigh to indicate that her sympathies were entirely with Mrs. Claybourne. Helen and I ate with splendid appetites.

After dinner we seated ourselves in a solemn circle in the drawing room—a disposition of the household that revealed a careful plan on Mr. Claybourne's part.

"Now, mother," he began to his wife when we were all seated, "these two young people want to get married."

At this simple statement of fact Mrs. Claybourne collapsed. Through many sobs Miss Hershey at last inserted a bottle of smelling salts. Mr. Claybourne waited patiently for the first paroxysm to pass. I held Helen's hand.

"It will have to be some time in July," Mr. Claybourne resumed, "as Ted's father has ordered him to sail for England on August first."

"I—I—didn't expect you to turn against me too," sobbed and choked Mrs. Claybourne, "and stand by while our only daughter was ca—carried off to—to England."

Mr. Claybourne returned gently and patiently to the attack. "Now, mother, we went all through this before when they were engaged. It is natural for two engaged people to get married."

"N—not when one of them is a ch—child," she wailed. "I'll never consent—never—not until Helen is twenty-one."

There was a lot more of this, but it was repetition of the same statements and objections. By some mysterious process of feminine tact, Helen inserted the date of July 30th into the discussion, and to my intense and overwhelming amazement, Mrs. Claybourne suddenly sat up and announced that there wasn't a moment to lose. True, this was at the end of about two hours' futile struggle; nevertheless it was the unexpectedness of the surrender that left me speechless. Mrs. Claybourne at once launched into the subject next nearest her heart—clothes; her own imaginary ailments were number one.

Helen entered the debate in earnest at this point, and once

more I was surprised, this time at Helen's powers of argument.

In the middle of this new controversy, which was after all but guerilla fighting now the main action had been won, Mr. Claybourne arose and announced his departure for the club. As I seemed to have no share in what was going on, I likewise deemed it prudent to go.

"Poor Ted," whispered Helen to me at the door, "I feel awfully sorry for you. You've been a lamb."

With this enigmatic compliment and a kiss, I was thrust into the night at Mr. Claybourne's side.

"Thank you," I said lamely, as we parted at the corner of State Street.

"Good-night, Ted. It's been quite a day's work."

Mine wasn't over. I sat up half the night writing a letter to my father. That was hard, too.

CHAPTER TWELVE

WE PASS AN ORDEAL AND SAIL FOR HOME

THE warm days of May and June found Helen and me again riding over the low rolling country back of Deep Harbor. At least, that is what we did on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. On other days we rode at night, not without protest from Mrs. Claybourne. Fortunately, however, the trousseau kept her too deeply employed to offer much resistance.

Spring in that country was the same joy and wonder that it is in England. The fields stayed brown longer, perhaps, for vineyards are slow in coming into leaf, and Indian corn is not planted until late. The woods made up for any delay of the open fields. Such brilliant, tender greens of ferns and mosses, such strange and overpowering scents from grasses and leafy hollows! To be sure, we watched the panorama of spring and early summer with lovers' eyes, but I defy any one not to find that countryside an earthly paradise.

And at night, even in the darkness when there was no moon, we rode miles through velvety black, rich with the odours of growing things. Dogs would bark at our horses from farm-yard gates as we passed, and sleeping cattle near the road would lift drowsy heads in surprise at the sound of our horses' hoofs. There were no motor-cars to come roaring down at us from around corners with dazzling glare of monster eyes, or so few that they were not met on back country roads. We could ride on with loose rein, certain no danger was ahead. It was on these rides that we could really talk and get to know one another. Not that we had rushed at love in the autumn, ignorant of what we did. Yet it seemed as if each day we found new depths to explore and grew nearer to one another the further we went.

I can remember little of what we said or of what subjects we talked about. Much of it was lovers' talk, sometimes too absurd or trivial to put down in black and white, or else too sacred to come staring at one from the pages of a narrative. At other times we spoke of that future, now so near us, and built dream plans—a little cottage with a red-tiled roof to be somewhere in Hertfordshire, with a vegetable garden and standard rose trees; or again, we wandered in fancy through the mysteries of London, buying books off a stall in the Farringdon Road or sitting in some old church near the crossed feet of a Crusader. It was I who built up for her the dream pictures of England—the England of my childhood—the London which, once it is in one's blood, is there forever. Helen had never been abroad, and to her my stories were like those Othello told to Desdemona. She learned to know England in imagination and came to speak familiarly of it, as if she herself had grown up on its soil.

And yet we both loved America too. From a hilltop in May, looking across miles of open country to the blue lake, our hearts would swell with joy that so fair a land was ours. England was to be our country of adventure, in which, side by side, we were to seek fame and do our allotted task in life. We thought no less of one country for the joy with which we looked forward to the other.

On the first of July Knowlton and I turned the factory over to the representatives of the new owners. They were a New York corporation, and I was rather amused to observe that the general manager arrived with the same chip on his shoulder for Deep Harbor that I had first carried. He was a little, fussy man of about thirty-five, with a brown Van Dyke beard, and he asked me, with a haughty air, if I knew where there was anything fit to eat to be found.

"You have had breakfast at Shaefer's," I said. I could see Knowlton's grin over the corner of my shoulder. We were in his office at the factory.

"I have," Mr. Ebling replied, with a grimace.

"There is no place in Deep Harbor that calls itself a restaurant where you can get anything fit to eat, Mr. Ebling." I uttered this solemnly.

"Good God!" he exclaimed.

"But if you will lunch with me today, I can promise you satisfaction. I can also arrange a card for you at the club. It has a rather remarkable chef."

His gratitude was overpowering. Then we proceeded to sign endless papers, with some exchanges of difficulties between the lawyers of each party. I had a full power of attorney from my father to sign for him, and whenever a lawyer said "Here, if you please," I wrote my name with a flourish. At the end a certified check was handed to me, and I passed it on to Knowlton. Then Knowlton and I stood up. Our tenure was over.

As Mr. Ebling followed me out, I caught Knowlton stealing a last look at his little office. He lingered a moment by the shop door and watched the men at the machines, as we arrived downstairs. Since we were still to be in Deep Harbor for another month, there was no ceremony of saying good-bye. Some of the men, nevertheless, came up to shake hands with Knowlton and me. I hated to turn these workmen over to another management, and I saw Knowlton was thinking the same thing. He had built up an extraordinarily efficient and loyal set of men,—"hand-picked," he called them. I had a distinct impression that Mr. Ebling would not be so good a man to work for. His Van Dyke beard was against him. Also his eyes lacked a twinkle; in its stead was a look which showed that Mr. Ebling was the most important object to be considered.

The three of us walked away together, Mr. Ebling picking his way with some displeasure through the choking dust of our Twelfth Street.

"Where are we going, Ted? To the club?" Knowlton asked, as I kept on down Twelfth Street.

"Mr. Claybourne was kind enough to suggest that the three of us take luncheon with him at his residence. I thought we

could walk to Myrtle Boulevard and point out some of our important plants to Mr. Ebling on the way. Over there," I said, turning to Ebling, "is the Deep Harbor Packing Company. Beyond is the Lakeside Casting and Manufacturing Company."

"Good God," exclaimed Mr. Ebling, stumbling over an empty tin can that lay in the middle of the street. Knowlton's grin widened and deepened. It grew positively diabolic as Mr. Ebling took a silk handkerchief from his sleeve and began flicking dust from his spats.

"Don't they ever water this confounded street?" he asked.

"Never," I replied. "Wait until August—this is nothing."

"Is there no way we can ride?" he inquired at the end of an interminable block of noisy and dirty buildings.

"The cars don't take us where we want to go," I replied. "We can soon turn down Wintergreen Street, and then we are almost there."

Knowlton, by now, was signalling me to be careful, but I was having too much fun. "That is a model plant," I continued, like a cathedral guide. "It's the Deep Harbor Wrought Iron Works. I understand that their power plant holds the world's record for the number of pounds of water evaporated per pound of coal."

Knowlton made a noise which sounded very much like a suppressed snort. Mr. Ebling politely adjusted his pince-nez and gazed at the brick walls. A freight train, the engine spitting live cinders and greasy smoke, clanged up the street between us and the model plant. Mr. Ebling shook cinders from his light grey Fedora hat, and wiped smut from his eyes.

I took mercy upon him at this point and turned down a side street leading toward the residence section.

"Really," Mr. Ebling protested, as we came to Myrtle Boulevard, "I'm not presentable enough to lunch with your friends. Please tell me the way back to the hotel." I would not hear of this, so he again made such a toilet as he could with his handkerchief. I rang the bell at the Claybournes', and in we went. Mr. Ebling's affability returned at once.

Mrs. Claybourne was gracious and Helen deliciously demure. She sensed a joke somewhere from my manner, but could not guess what it was. A cocktail made Mr. Ebling expand. I could see another opinion of Deep Harbor visibly forming itself in his mind.

"We've just come from the plant," I said, as we sat down.

"Then you transferred across town from the square," remarked Mrs. Claybourne.

"No, we walked," I interrupted hastily. "I wanted to point out some of our plants to Mr. Ebling."

"Walked!" cried Mrs. Claybourne.

"I understood we could not get here except by walking," Mr. Ebling said, raising his eyebrows.

"Ted, you must be crazy," Mr. Claybourne chuckled. "You ride from your plant within a block of here every day."

"Ted thought Mr. Ebling would like to see the sights," Knowlton spoke in my defence.

"Yes, very interesting place from a commercial point of view. I enjoyed getting a general idea of the town."

Helen pinched me under the table, and I let out an unexpected "ouch."

"Helen!" said her mother. "What are you doing?"

"She pinched me and made me scream," I said. "It isn't fair."

"Those two children are engaged, Mr. Ebling," Mr. Claybourne interposed. "You'll have to pardon their bad manners."

Mr. Ebling lifted his eyebrows again. "Really? I congratulate you."

After luncheon Mr. Claybourne took over Mr. Ebling, and Knowlton carried me away to deposit our check at the bank. It was part of the agreement that Knowlton and I should work beside the new management for a month, until things ran smoothly.

"Don't play any more kid tricks on Ebling, Ted," Knowlton warned me as we parted at the bank. "You've done enough for today."

The great day was approaching; sometimes it seemed with great rapidity, and again I thought the end of the month would never come. The trousseau, with all kinds of shopping and trying things on, took up a great deal of Helen's time, and Mrs. Claybourne banished me for days on end. I did a lot of work in the laboratory, with the new chemist, to keep occupied, but I found it hard to take work seriously.

One morning Mrs. Claybourne informed me that she had made an appointment for me at eleven to call upon the minister who was to marry us. I had no chance to find out from Helen what this meant, but was bundled off to keep the engagement.

I entered his study with decidedly mixed feelings. It was reminiscent of going to the dentist's. He was a tall, sandy-haired elderly young man, with a fine but slightly stagey face. "Could play *jeune premiers* just as he stands," I thought, as he shook my hand and seated me in a deep leathern armchair.

"So you and Helen are to be married," he began, offering me a cigarette. It did not put me at my ease. The only suitable reply I could think of was "Yes—on the thirtieth." I lit the cigarette, hoping inspiration from it later.

"It is a solemn step you are taking," he continued. "Are you sure you have thoroughly searched your hearts?"

"If you mean, do we love each other, I think there is no doubt of it," I answered, the bristles on my back rising a trifle.

"Did you know I went to your college?" he asked, shifting the attack.

"No. What was your class?"

"Before your time, I think." He went on to tell me some reminiscences of Hilltown in his day. He had been a 'varsity half-back, and I remembered now the tradition of him that came down to our crowd. I was annoyed to discover that I was beginning to feel at ease. At last we reached the point. Would I go to communion with Helen the Sunday before our marriage?

I did not know what to say. I did not wish to hurt Mrs.

Claybourne's feelings, but I did not see how I could, in honesty. I put my difficulty to him.

"My mother belongs to the Church of England," I explained, "and it is the only one I have ever attended—except cathedrals on the Continent. But I don't know what I believe."

"Do any of us?" he said with a rather wonderful softness in his eyes. "Do we have to believe anything? Isn't faith enough?"

I thought for a while. "I don't wish to commit perjury," I said.

He smiled. "You have faith enough to believe it would be perjury?"

"Or false pretences. Your church—the Episcopal—is a great tradition—one I respect as I do our other English-speaking traditions—all the things we stand for that make up the decent things of this world. I value all of it too much to lie about it. Don't you see?—I can't come to communion, for it means too much to come dishonestly."

"You are very young, Edward," he smiled with his hand on my shoulder. "Will you let an older man decide?"

"I wish I could," I said.

"If Helen comes, you surely won't stand aside?"

"But will she come? Have you asked her?"

His face clouded for a moment with a genuine look of pain.

"Don't you both wish to marry with clean hearts?"

"Yes," I answered, "and we shall. That is why I can't lie to please you."

I knew my retort was unfair, but I wanted him also to see my side. He stood a while looking down at me. It was clear there was nothing theatrical about this man's faith, however like an actor he might look. I knew he wanted to reach out to me and hold me with the faith that held him. Yet I could not yield. Had he perhaps been less in earnest, less sincere, I might have offered him lip-service for the sake of peace. His very strength gave me strength to resist. It had to be all or nothing. I got to my feet.

"I am sorry," I said, holding out my hand.

"I think you are, Edward," he answered, taking my hand in a firm grip. "You'll not urge Helen against it?"

"Helen's conscience is her own."

"Come, that's a good beginning. And because you are sorry to refuse, I have still hope." He smiled at me. I shook my head.

"At any rate, you'll come to church next Sunday?"

"Yes"—and with this compromise we parted.

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Helen's friends vied with one another in giving us small dinner parties and dances during the last two weeks. There was no limit to the hospitality of Deep Harbor, once you were an accepted member of what was known as "the right people." If I dropped into Mr. Claybourne's down-town club of a late afternoon, a dozen crowded tables would invite me to sit down, with the greeting "We're just ordering a round, Ted. What will yours be?" I knew all the business men and the younger crowd of my own age, but none of them intimately. Knowlton, curiously enough, was on the same footing of apparent welcome, but he had not been invited to join either the country club or the down-town club. Miss Hershey's refusal to visé his passport kept him an outsider, even with the men. No one disliked him, and there was a general appreciation of his business sagacity, but he simply did not belong. I made several efforts to break down these bars for Knowlton. It was useless; they would not give way.

The whole social organization of Deep Harbor was an interesting study in practical democracy. The inner circle of business men, who seemed to treat a barber with the same intimate friendliness that they did each other, nevertheless were a close corporation into which it was not easy to gain admittance. The women were, of course, even more strict. A few men belonged to the down-town club whom we never saw at dinners or dances. There were only three streets on

which it was permissible to live; Myrtle Boulevard was the chief of these, but two more, parallel to it, were allowable. On the connecting cross streets the newly married couples of "the right people" lived in two-family houses, against the day they would move to the important thoroughfare. A house anywhere else was taboo, unless one went right out into the country, on the country-club side of the town. It was a matter of considerable uneasiness to Mrs. Claybourne that my little study and bedroom was on the wrong side of State Street. I heard from her that that had been also one of the earlier objections to "taking me up." I had, however, stuck to my rooms, for they were both comfortable and inexpensive.

I do not pretend to know how the aristocracy of Deep Harbor came into being. Success, which implied the possession of brains as a corollary, coupled with long residence in the town, appeared to be the general basis of it. On the other hand, Knowlton had brains and had made a success of his work; yet he was excluded. Furthermore, the men all admitted that he was "a thorough good fellow" and "a good mixer," as they expressed it. I could see no logic in keeping him out. The essence of an aristocracy, though, is the absence of any logical premise for its elections. My position, of course, was solely owing to the Clayournes.

But I must not permit my reflections on the social mysteries of Deep Harbor to interrupt too long the narrative of events. A day came when our wedding was but three more days away. It was the last time Helen and I could ride together over the hills. The final hours, according to Mrs. Claybourne, were to be spent in such frenzied preparations as would entirely forbid my presence at the house, to say nothing of riding. We determined to make the most of this ride. We packed a luncheon, bought down-town, summoned Leonidas, and rode forth.

We went slowly, a little stunned by the fact that this was our last ride. Up the hill, past "Henery" Tyler's Five Mile

Farm, was our way, for we wanted to retrace all the steps of that day which had opened our eyes. We stopped at the Tylers' for a word of greeting. "Henery" was not at home—he was "in the city somewhere, most likely as not wastin' his time," but Mrs. Tyler was delighted to see us, in spite of her momentary bitterness on the subject of "Henery."

"He'll be down-right sorry to miss you young folks," she said. "It's mighty nice of you to come 'way out here to say good-bye. But Henery's always gallivantin' round when he ought to be at home 'tending to the farm. Men is restless creatures anyway, Miss Helen. Won't you come in and set in the parlour? I've got some new milk cooling out in the shed."

We accepted and dismounted.

"Walk right in and make yourselves to home. I guess you better leave the dog outside. Dogs track up a house so."

With a hasty apology for her thoughtlessness, Helen tied Leonidas to the fence. We entered the familiar little room with its horsehair furniture and the conch shells in a glass case, and sat on the very sofa where Helen had lain that evening with a wrenched knee. Mrs. Tyler disappeared in search of the milk. In a few minutes she returned with milk, a plate of cookies, and a jar of apple-butter.

"Kind of warm today," she rattled on, busy with her offering of hospitality, "but I guess we've got to expect a little hot weather in July. Milk's mighty refreshing on a warm day, 'specially if you been exercisin'. Help yourself to the apple-butter, Miss Helen. It's a good spread on cookies."

We sat and ate, grateful for her genuine friendliness. Her cookies would have taken a prize anywhere.

"Seems like it was only yesterday, Miss Helen, when you used to be in short dresses and drive out by here with your father on the way to the old cider mill. And to think of you

gettin' married and goin' off across the ocean to live! Must be pretty hard on your mother to lose her daughter that way. 'Tain't as if you was to have your home across the street. I never had any children, so I ain't had to suffer. Sometimes I think it's a blessin' when I hear of the goings-on of the young folk today. Well, you never know how things might have been. Takes all my time to keep up with what is. It's the Lord's will, I tell Henery—He knows best. Take another glass of milk, Miss Helen. There's plenty more where that come from. Feed's gettin' scarce, though. It dries up in this weather."

We chatted awhile with Mrs. Tyler—perhaps it would be more accurate to say that we inserted with difficulty monosyllables at intervals into her monologue—and finally persuaded her to let us go.

A little further up the road we paused again at what we thought was about the spot where Helen's horse had fallen with her. We slid off our saddles and sat on the bank by the roadside, staring at the patch of dusty road where the miracle had been revealed to us.

"It seems years and years ago, Ted," Helen whispered. "I can't remember very much back of it. I just feel as if we had always known each other."

"In Avalon a day is a thousand years," I whispered back as she put her head against my shoulder. "Count up the number of days and see how many thousand years we have lived."

Deep Harbor lay in a smoky haze below us, and the lake beyond shimmered blue and silver in the July sun. The yellow road went straight down the hill toward the town. Across the distant fields the steam of a passing train trailed across the tops of the trees. I watched Helen's grey eyes staring at each familiar detail of her home—for the whole lay spread at our feet. The grey deepened and turned a little misty at last.

"Forgive me, Ted," she said, clinging tightly to me, "but

it hurts a little to go, even with you." I kissed her wet eyes and said nothing. "I love you, Ted. I love you," and she sobbed in my arms.

We ate our luncheon in the clearing by the wood. It was too hot for a camp fire, and, as the sandwiches had melted, Leonidas de la Patte Jaune ate more than we did. Helen was back in her usual mood of high content. Her laugh, at some clumsy antic of Leonidas or some word of mine, rang again and again through the solitude of our hiding place. The coming of dusk and the mosquitoes drove us out at last.

"Another whole day of perfect happiness, Ted," she confided, leaning across to me from her saddle.

Only Mrs. Claybourne was displeased; we were late for dinner.

And then the great day came. I had thrown one last defiance in Miss Hershey's teeth by selecting Knowlton to be my best man. In spite of the grin he grinned when I asked him, I saw that secretly he was pleased—perhaps a little moved. He came round to my rooms early in the morning to lend me aid and comfort, although the wedding was not to be until two o'clock.

"Keep a stiff upper lip, Ted," was his greeting, as he unpacked a breakfast of sorts from various pockets. He would not hear of my going out for breakfast. "Shall I make some coffee?" he asked, as he took my alcohol lamp apart. "Here's a cantaloupe, just off the ice," and he banged a melon down on the table. "Got a knife?"

I sat up in my pyjamas and surveyed his preparations.

"I'm not an invalid, Knowlton," I protested, as he tried to make a slice of toast over a gas jet. "I don't know what you conceive the functions of a best man to be, but I did not ask for cooking to be included in the specifications. In fact, I'm not certain that even Shaefer's wouldn't manage breakfast better."

"Go to hell, Ted. I learned to cook before you were born," was his rejoinder.

"That puts me under no obligation to eat it," I retorted, "especially as I wasn't present."

"Shave and shut up," he replied, unmoved. Another slice of bread was suspended over the gas jet. I made my toilet leisurely and, at the end, ate a slice of his asphyxiated toast. The coffee was excellent, thanks to the ingeniousness of the machine that made it. So was the cantaloupe—but Knowlton had not made that, either.

"Knowlton," I said, with breakfast over, "when you make toast for me, you try my friendship far."

"You're an ungrateful hound. I've got your railroad tickets to New York. Transportation for two." He emphasized the latter statement. "By No. 46—the 5.02 p. m., Eastern standard time." Deep Harbor used both Eastern and Western time.

"Keep the tickets until I want them. One thing more. Do you expect me to sit here until two o'clock talking to you?"

Knowlton's ancient grin crinkled his eyes. "A little jumpy, aren't we? Well, I don't blame you. Listen to today's *Eagle*—it will soothe you. 'A marriage is to be solemnized this afternoon, at two o'clock at St. Asaph's Episcopal Church, Myrtle Boulevard, between Helen, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Claybourne of Myrtle Boulevard, and Edward Jevons, of London, England. The social prominence of the young people—Mr. Claybourne is one of the most prominent business men of our lake city, the president of the Claybourne Manufacturing Company, of Twelfth Street, and Mr. Jevons, the prospective groom, is favourably known for his connection with the Deep Harbor Manufacturing Company, lately acquired by a New York corporation—lends unusual interest to this affair. The Rev. Mr. Osborough will officiate. Decorations by Deering. A reception to a few intimate friends will follow at the Claybourne residence. Catering by Podalsky and Rodenheim.' "

I threw a book at Knowlton, which he skilfully dodged.

"That's nothing to what Miss Barnes, who does the social notes for the *Eagle*, will say tomorrow. You will be worth at least three quarters of a column—not front-page stuff, of course, but the feature story under 'Society,' opposite the woman's page," he continued, ignoring my threats.

At twelve I insisted upon going out to lunch. Knowlton stuck with me. In the grill room of the Otooska House—a lonesome spot, thronged only at night—we had a steak, with which Knowlton drank a glass of milk.

"I'm sorry, Knowlton," I said over cigarettes, "that you won't accept my father's offer and try your luck in England."

"I appreciate that, Ted. But I guess I belong over here. I'm going to take my bonus money and set up for myself as a consultant in New York. A man better stick to what he knows. If I went to London, I'd have to learn all over again. It's different with you—you are going home. I'm going to stay here."

A little before two, one of Deep Harbor's most elaborate "hacks" deposited Knowlton and me at the awning-covered approach to the portal of St. Asaph's. I remember that there were a few curious onlookers standing on the pavement outside, and inside, there seemed to be music and a lot of vegetation. Beyond these blurred impressions I can recollect nothing until I was aware that Helen was coming down the aisle on her father's arm. It flashed across me that Mrs. Claybourne must be weeping somewhere near. Helen looked at me steadily through her veil, a deep and wonderful grey in her eyes as she came on, and I know I wanted to cry out, "Oh, damn this ceremony—let's bolt for the station, dearest." We did as we had been instructed—just what, I don't know, but the Reverend Mr. Osborough's voice got under way promptly. It was in the air above me, I felt. Helen wore a wreath of orange blossoms—not unusual for a bride, of course—but I loathed their scent,

as I had ever since the day of my small-boyhood when a flower girl under Charing Cross station in London had thrust some beneath my nose.

The questions were beginning, and I made an effort to pull myself together. What was my cue? I heard Osborough whispering something under his breath. I had missed the first response, and he was prompting me. Would Knowlton grin? I couldn't look around. I stumbled through my lines, and Knowlton came forward with the ring. Helen was letter-perfect; not once did she fluff her lines or miss a bit of stage business. I admired her for it. We had to kneel—side by side. I saw the ring on her finger—it must be nearly over. We got up again—"Now!" I thought. No, Osborough was off again. What was this about? A sermon specially for our benefit—we were kneeling before the altar. I blinked at the candles to avoid looking at Osborough. I had hold of Helen's hand. I felt her press mine gently. "She's kept her head—I knew she would!" I thought in an ecstasy of delight over her self-control. "Probably knows everything that's happening." Ah, the benediction at last—obviously the finale; that isn't the right technical word. We were standing up—Helen had thrown back her veil.

"Kiss me quick, Ted, before any one else gets to me," I heard her say. I obeyed with great speed. Osborough was next, then Knowlton—things were growing confused again, and I'm not sure of my facts. There was a fearful uproar from the organ, and we were very near it. We started back down the aisle, Helen on my arm. Women peered into our faces. I felt that there were a great many persons treading on our heels—bridesmaids, some of them, and Knowlton mixed up with them. I wanted to look around, but a strange woman was glaring at me from a pew near at hand. What had become of my hat? It mysteriously appeared again at the door—out of the void a hand passed it to me. Helen and I were wafted into a carriage—I am certain our own legs had nothing to do with it—rice and confetti fell into our laps—and the horses started with a jerk.

"Ted, we're married," Helen said, and laid her cheek against mine. I closed my eyes and held her hand tightly. Some things are hard to realize. There was a clamour in my brain, and I couldn't think. The carriage stopped. The Claybourne house was not over a few hundred yards from the church.

Knowlton helped us out. "How the devil did you get here ahead of us?" I asked in terrified surprise. His grin returned. It was reassuring, like finding a link with home when lost in a strange place. The unseen force took us up the steps and into the house—more flowers and greens. We were made to stand by the drawing-room doors, Knowlton close behind me. Mr. and Mrs. Claybourne were next, and there were embraces; Mr. Claybourne shook my hand and clapped me on the back. Then floods of people—Uncle Peter and his wife, with bridesmaids and ushers. The ushers kissed Helen, and I had to kiss the bridesmaids. One got kissed twice, and there was a great deal of laughter at my expense. They were difficult to tell apart. In the background several women were weeping. After it did not seem possible I could kiss another girl—for all and sundry followed the bridesmaids, while Helen was kept busy by the male half of Deep Harbor—we sat down to what was called a breakfast.

There was a large bride's cake and champagne, to say nothing of Uncle Peter's speech. It was a funny speech: that is to say, each word he uttered was received with roars of laughter. I don't, myself, remember it. Plate after plate of various foods were put in front of us by swarthy foreign waiters, and whisked away again before I got around to eat. I wasn't hungry. In the midst of a particularly noisy demonstration I became aware that I was being called on for a speech.

"Get up, Ted," Helen whispered. I got up, and my teeth chattered, but no words flowed through them. Knowlton handed me a glass of champagne, with a grin floating across it. I said something; great applause and laughter. This

was encouraging, considering I hadn't any idea what I had said. I went on—more applause. I pulled Helen to her feet, and we drank from the same glass of champagne as a climax. Tremendous hit! We sat down.

Helen went upstairs to change to a travelling frock. From the top of the stairs she tossed her bridal bouquet to the bridesmaids. They tore it apart like a pack of hounds making a kill. Knowlton led me away to another room to dress, as a policeman might help a blind man across Piccadilly Circus. Mysteriously to me, I found my own dressing bag there and all my things laid out. Knowlton sat on the bed and grinned at me as I struggled into the other clothes.

"Pretty good for a somnambulist," he conceded when I had done.

"Knowlton," I said, trying my best to make my true feelings carry, "I don't know what I should have done without you today."

"I don't either," he grinned. "It was my toast at breakfast that gave you the strength for the ordeal."

He produced a packet of papers. "Now you are coming out of your trance nicely, I'll give you these," he went on. "This envelope, which is green, contains your railroad tickets; this blue one, your steamer tickets; the white one, the checks for your baggage. Get that?"

He opened my coat and put them in the inside pocket and buttoned me up again, like a child. "If you find your mind gone on the train, just tell the conductor to search you."

At the door of the room I had a final word with Mr. Claybourne. Then the three of us went downstairs. In a few minutes Helen appeared. She looked more beautiful in her tailor-made travelling dress than in her bridal array. My head swam again when I went to her. We were surrounded by a babel of voices, and Miss Hershey led in Mrs. Claybourne. Every one was going to the station to see us off. Leonidas was howling dismally outside from the centre

of a large crate which was to be his prison as far as New York. On this one point Helen was adamant. She would not go to England without Leonidas.

The preliminary farewells began, and even Jane, the maid, joined the chorus of feminine weepers. The Claybournes, Helen, and I got into one carriage; Knowlton, with an assortment of bridesmaids, followed in another. More rice and confetti, not to speak of old shoes tied to the carriage by white ribbons. We were not to be spared a single torture. The crowd at the station were delighted with our arrival. Leonidas and his cage gave the final touch. Some merry wag, blast his eyes, had tied a large bow of white ribbon to Leonidas' collar. There was no time to remove it, for the New York train thundered in from the further West, and the ivory flashes of a Pullman porter took over our care. We left in a bedlam, Mr. Claybourne's face looking rather solemnly at us, Mrs. Claybourne, quite overcome, on Miss Hershey's shoulder, and Knowlton's grin frozen half way. Helen and I waved as long as they were in sight, then turned around in our seats and faced each other. . . .

Two days later the Cunarder backed out from her dock and our voyage began. Helen and I stood on the top deck, where we could see the tugs turn the ship around. The fantastic skyline of Manhattan loomed over us.

"Lady Grey Eyes, I love you," I whispered, as our boat went slowly down stream. "Are you glad?"

"My darling!" floated from her lips, no more than a breath. I had to lean close to her to hear. "I'm so happy, Ted!"

We stood upon the upper deck until dusk, watching the coast fade into the haze. At last it had gone, save for one far flashing light. We were at sea.

At dinner we found ourselves seated opposite a dear old English lady, who took one look at Helen and then and there resolved to "mother" her. We had hoped, half seriously, that we could escape passing as bride and groom. No sooner,

however, had we taken our seats than a delighted steward brought in a large basket of white roses, set off with white ribbons. This he placed in front of Helen. It bore a card, with this legend: "From the Deep Harbor gang." The old English lady said, "How sweet of your friends, my dear." I had another opinion of their conduct. I didn't mind so much, for Helen was loveliest when she blushed.

After dinner we sat and talked a bit with the old English lady—a Mrs. Parsons from High Wycombe. To tell the truth, I liked to hear her call Helen "my dear." It was a good omen. She asked us a hundred questions which, somehow, we did not mind at all. Helen poured out her heart to her. It was "Ted this" and "Ted that" until I threatened to put my hand over her mouth.

"I shall call you Edward and Helen," Mrs. Parsons announced decisively. "It would be positively ridiculous to call two such babies Mr. and Mrs. Jevons. How old are you, Helen?"

"Nineteen," said Helen with absolutely her prettiest blush. "And you, Edward?"

"Twenty-four," I confessed, as Helen most brazenly leaned against my shoulder.

"What your mothers were thinking of, I can't imagine," exclaimed Mrs. Parsons. "You shouldn't be out without a nurse."

When we went to our cabin Helen said: "I like to have people nice to us, don't you, Ted?"

"I love to have them nice to you," I answered.

A few days later Helen and I stood far forward on the boat deck, straining our eyes for the first glimpse of land. She was all excitement, dancing up and down with little steps and squeezing my arm in between times. "It is just like one of our fairy stories, Ted," she whispered, her face so close that the sea wind blew a damp lock of her hair across my eyes. From the ship's bridge a cynical first officer, telescope

under arm, smiled down at us. Helen turned toward him and called: "Oh, please tell us as soon as you see anything." He nodded and sent a sailor down to us with a pair of binoculars. Porpoises were leaping and playing about the ship; the sea gulls were beginning to accumulate off the stern. Helen tried to focus the glasses, but her hands shook so with joy and excitement, I had to help her.

Suddenly the look-out called from the crow's nest on the mast. According to the experts of the sea the noise he made should have been "Land-ho!" but it did not sound like anything articulate. We could still see nothing, for we were lower down. The officer on the bridge pointed the direction for us; Helen and I kept snatching the binoculars from one another. Then the top of a light-house stuck up above the horizon. We could hear a scurrying of passengers.

"How disappointing!" exclaimed Helen. "I thought we would see white chalk cliffs."

"This is Ireland—not England," I answered. "The Old Head of Kinsale is dark rock a few miles behind the light-house. If the Irish cliffs were like the English, Irishmen would paint them a different colour."

It was not long before we were close enough to the coast to see the emerald of the fields at the summit of the rocky cliffs. A line of white edged the meeting of the black rocks with the blue of the sea. Helen drew a long breath as she gazed at the startling beauty of the Irish coast.

"Ted! Ted!" she whispered. "It makes me want to cry."

Passengers crowded about us, and the wise man who knows everything began explaining in a loud voice to all and sundry.

"Ted, take me away. Isn't there somewhere on this boat that we can see all by ourselves?"

We found a cranny, further aft, between two life boats. Helen rested her elbows on the rail, her chin in her hands, and gazed, the starlight of her eyes shining.

"Don't speak to me for a while, darling," she said. "I want to look."

I studied the curve of the back of her neck, where the light brown hair played little tricks of its own while her head was bent forward. She was unconscious of what I was doing.

"Put your arm around me, Ted. No one can see," she sighed from between her hands. "Don't talk."

I obeyed. I never touched her that it did not seem a miracle that I should be permitted such liberty. It was like touching something exquisitely delicate and sacred. Not that she was "petite" in the sense in which that banal word is generally used; on the contrary, she was tall and of athletic figure. It was her beauty that seemed, nevertheless, dainty and fragile. "You'll spoil me, Ted, if you make such a fuss over me," she had once laughingly warned me.

We were wakened from our reverie by the hearty voice of Mrs. Parsons behind us. "That is Ireland over there, my children," she said, with the air of one giving valuable and hitherto unknown information. Helen and I started apart guiltily. We had not yet been married long enough to get over the self-consciousness of an engaged couple. Mrs. Parsons unrolled a map, with great difficulty because of the wind. We were in for a lecture. "This is where we are,"

She indicated a spot which would be about sixty miles in circumference, out in the open sea. "Up there is Queenstown. That is where we are going. Then Liverpool is up there, just back of Anglesea."

Helen said the right thing, while her eyes shot a look at me which only I could understand.

"See, I've brought you some chocolates, my dear," and Mrs. Parsons fished in the jumbled depths of a handbag. She handed them to Helen. "Mind you don't forget to come down for tea. I'll send the steward when it's quite ready," and she was off.

Helen laughed a laugh that was a joy to hear. "She'll be bringing us bottles of warm milk next. But she's a dear, Ted."

After tea we returned to the boat deck. The ship was approaching Queenstown harbour. There may be more beau-

tiful spots on the surface of this earth than this harbour, but if so, Helen and I had never seen any of them.

"Ted, did you ever dream of such green grass! And look at those little white houses—like fairy houses, Ted! And the trees! What a funny shape they are, Ted. Look at them."

"I am looking, my dearest." I did not dare say what it meant to me to be nearing home. I thought it would sound disloyal to Helen and to the happiness we were bringing with us.

"There is an English cruiser, flying the white ensign," I exclaimed—a queer feeling inside me at the sight of her flag.

"Is that an English flag? I thought the English flag was red, with a union Jack in the corner."

"Helen!" I cried, in a voice more shocked than I realized it would sound. "You don't know the white ensign?"

"Ted, how can I possibly know all your beastly old flags?" she flared up. "Please don't look at me like that, Ted. What have I done?"—and a mist gathered quickly in her grey eyes.

"I forgot, dearest," I said, slipping my arm tightly around her. "Please forgive me. But that flag means we are home."

Her soft hand found mine and clung. "Home, Ted," she whispered, "our home." She looked at the cruiser lying near us. The ensign fluttered jauntily in the wind. "We are Americans, Ted," she said after a long pause. "I wonder if we ought to feel the way we do?"

"The best way is to love both our homes, Helen sweetheart."

She looked up at me and smiled: "Love is enough, Ted," she said softly—and we both remembered the old clearing by the wood back of Deep Harbor, where we had read William Morris together.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

WE ARRIVE AND LOOK FORWARD TO ANOTHER ARRIVAL

MY father, mother, and sister met the steamer train at Euston. We tumbled out of our compartment a little breathless over the prospect of another ordeal. We seemed hopelessly mixed up with luggage and steamer acquaintances saying good-byes, when I saw my father pushing through the crowd toward us. He hardly looked at me; it was Helen he wanted to see. My mother and sister were close behind. It gave me quite a shock to note that my sister had her hair up and was wearing long dresses. She looked almost as old as Helen, as indeed she was. The family kissed Helen thoroughly, and my sister clung tenaciously to me. I couldn't think of much to say, except "Well, here we are."

"What a frightful Yankee twang you have, Ted," exclaimed my sister. We made our way toward one of the London and North Western's private omnibuses.

"Ted! Please don't forget our trunks," Helen cautioned, as I was about to climb in. My father went with me to the luggage van, a porter following. We left Helen chattering away at mother and sister as if there were no such thing in the world as embarrassment.

"I like the look of her, Ted," my father said.

"I'm not surprised," I answered, trying to imitate one of Knowlton's grins. We fished out the trunks and started back.

"Pleasant passage?" my father inquired. "Helen wasn't seasick, I hope."

"A bit off her feed one day—remarkably smooth voyage."

"Ah—it's certain to be a good crossing in August."

"Quite," I replied.

We got into the omnibus, after Helen had completed taking the census of the luggage.

"Don't trust Ted with anything like that," my mother remarked. "He's left my boxes all over the Continent."

I sat beside Helen, for I wanted to watch her face when she first saw the streets of London.

"Ted, look!" she cried, as we emerged from the classic gateway of Euston Station, "there's a huge horse with fluffy feet."

"It's a Clydesdale—aren't they beauties?"

"I never saw such a splendid horse."

My mother was sitting quietly watching us. I am afraid she felt I had gone a long way from her—or perhaps it was the effect of Leonidas. We had forgotten to warn the family he was coming. The first sight of Leonidas was always a shock to any one. Even my sister, who was thoroughly doggy, had recoiled when he smiled at her at the station. Helen was finding a succession of wonders through the omnibus window.

"We've taken a small house out Kensington way, where you'll live with us for the present, Ted." I looked up in surprise at my father's words.

"It will be much more economical and in every way better, until Helen learns English housekeeping," my mother said.

"I suppose you've some work for me to do?" I asked anxiously, for I thought I saw the first trace of a cloud on Helen's face.

"We'll talk about that later," my father replied, with a desire to change the subject obvious in his tone.

It is a long drive from Euston to Kensington. I sat close to Helen and pointed out the streets and buildings we passed. Her interest was keen, eager, for the panorama contained many places that we had talked about—the Marble Arch,

Park Lane, Hyde Park Corner, Knightsbridge. Names were changing into realities before her eyes—and all the while my sister and mother sat studying Helen. I was extremely quick to detect my mother's unexpressed opinions and impressions, chiefly because I had differed so often with them that instinct had taught me how to anticipate, when possible, her displeasure. And I could feel, with absolute certainty, as our bus trotted on down Knightsbridge, that she had made up her mind to be hostile. "Very well," I thought to myself, "Helen and I must fight it out alone, then." My father was looking out the rear window; I recognized from his attitude that he had sensed the same thing I had. Perhaps the news had not been so well received as letters had led me to suppose. I was hoping desperately that the sensitive girl by my side would not notice the growing tension in the air.

It was a pleasant house before which we stopped. There were a few shrubs in front, and the yellow cream stucco residence appeared to hint at a bit of garden behind. It was on a quiet side street and stood in the centre of a row of other houses exactly like it.

Chitty, now three years our man-of-all-work, and Sims, my mother's maid, received us. Chitty drew himself up and saluted me, a thing he always did on my homecomings. He had been an officer's batman. "Glad to see you home, sir," he said.

"Thanks, Chitty. Kiddies all well?" He had a numerous family who lived out.

"Thank you, sir. Every one quite fit."

"It's good to see you back again, master Ted," Sims contributed. Chitty and Sims attacked the pile of luggage on the roof of the bus, after a preliminary run-in between Chitty and the driver concerning the best method to pursue. There was a new housemaid, who curtseyed to us as we entered.

"Your rooms are up here, Edward," said my mother. Helen and I followed her upstairs hand in hand. My sister

tagged along in the rear. We were shown into a cozy little bedroom, with a cozier study off it. The windows looked out into the bit of garden which I had guessed was there. All my books and furniture were arranged as I had always had them, but in the bedroom there were several new things for Helen. A little box of a dressing room completed our quarters, which were tiny but ours. Helen's eyes lighted as she looked around. Then she walked straight up to my mother and kissed her. My mother received it coldly, making no return. Helen was so delighted with all that had been done for her that I don't think she noticed.

"Are you pleased, Ted?" my mother asked.

"Of course, mother. Why do you ask?"

Chitty arrived, bowed beneath a trunk. My mother and sister left us. The total of our baggage swamped our little rooms. It was all in at last and the door closed. The belated Sims arrived with hot water, just as Helen had seated herself on my lap in the study for a talk.

"Anything else I can fetch you, Mrs. Ted?" Sims inquired. We got her out of the way.

"Mrs. Ted!" Helen cried gleefully,—"what a delicious name for me! I love it!"

"Old Sims is a privileged character, dear. She is one of my earliest recollections. She is also the family safety-valve. Every one curses her when anything goes wrong."

Helen laughed. "What a delightfully absurd country, Ted. Imagine a Deep Harbor servant being any one's earliest recollection."

She began that feminine mystery known as "changing," still talking to me over her shoulder.

"Ted, I'll have to pinch myself—I can't believe I'm awake. Is it all really true?"

"Absolutely true," I answered, kissing her mouth.

"And to think you never told me about Chitty. He's marvellous. Where did you get him?"

"He's one of my finds," I answered. "I met this big

chap one day on the street—looking for work. An ex-soldier with a good many years in India to his credit. I liked his face and the way he stood up to my questions. I offered him a job, and now I don't think he could be driven away. My father pays him, but when I am home, he regards himself as my exclusive property."

"We'll take him to the cottage with us, Ted. I won't have you without Chitty."

"I'd put on a dinner gown, Helen," I said, as I saw her getting out one of her afternoon dresses from a trunk.

"Just to dine at home with the family, Ted?"

"My mother is rather fussy about dinner. It is the one ceremony she believes in. And besides, I want Helen to look her beautifulst tonight."

I helped her unpack a bit, for she began to exclaim over the condition of her dresses as she took them out.

"You might as well leave them," I objected. "Sims will see to them."

I made her put on all her finery, including the few pieces of simple jewelry that had been among her wedding presents. The total effect was most satisfactory to my eyes. She seemed more beautiful every time I looked at her.

The dinner gong had gone about five minutes before we were ready to come down. I had clumsily mussed Helen's hair at the last moment, and there had been a pause to repair the damage.

"I wish, Ted, you would try, while you are in my house, to be on time to dinner," my mother said as we sat down.

The dinner began under an air of constraint, for it was always difficult for me to conceal my irritation when my mother rebuked me. My sister smiled sympathy and reassurance across the table at me, and Chitty hovered about me with the hock. Helen felt that I had been put off and kept her eyes on her plate. Right after the soup, Leonidas was ordered out of the room. I was on the verge of a

protest when I felt Helen's hand on my arm. Instead, there was another silence.

"Helen, where did you and Ted get that extraordinary dog?" my sister asked, meaning well.

"Let us talk about something pleasant, if we can," my mother cut in. Revolt came near to breaking forth. My father saved the situation this time by telling me rapidly some story of an occurrence during my absence.

The table was cleared at last, and I was left with my father and our glasses of port. I could hear my mother playing a Beethoven sonata, which I knew for an ominous sign. The piano was her refuge in times of stress. When things were very bad, she played Bach. My father and I looked at each other, each waiting for the other to begin. I was damned if I would, for I felt most emphatically that Helen required no explanation. Any one who could not see by looking once at her that she was the most adorable girl in the world—words failed even my thoughts.

"It isn't Helen—it's you," my father said, studying his cigar.

"I don't see—" I began.

"Steady, Ted. Listen to me. There are a good many factors in the problem. Your mother idolizes you—"

"It has been fairly well dissembled tonight—"

"Be quiet, Ted! I won't have you speak in that way. If you knew more about the world—or about women—you would know that it is very hard for your mother to forgive the woman who marries you—you are an only son—Ted, you must *not* explode until I have finished. Last of all, she can't quite forgive you for getting married when she was not there. Nothing has ever hurt her so much as not being at your wedding. Can't you understand?"

"Well, what am I to do? Sit quiet while she insults Helen?"

"You are riding for trouble, Ted, if you go at it like that. Helen will bring her around in no time, provided you

behave yourself. I think your wife has commonsense—she has a levelheaded look in her face—”

“Thank you very much,” I sneered.

“She’s good old American stock like the rest of us, Ted, and I’ll back her to win. I haven’t been home much, Ted, for a good many years, but I recognized her type the instant I saw her at Euston. Now the thing for you to do is to go out of your way to be nice to your mother—and leave the rest to Helen.”

“Considering everything,” I replied, “I think my mother might meet me at least half way. I’ve been out in America for over a year, working ten hours a day in a bloody factory, and when I come home with the best wife in the world, I am regarded as having done something criminal.”

“Don’t be an ass, Ted—or try to make yourself sorry for yourself. You had a damned good time with your ten hours a day, as you call it, and you got a jolly sight better reward for it than you deserve. In my humble opinion, Helen is too good for you.”

“We agree on one thing—that’s a blessing,” I answered, feeling that I was losing when I really had a good case. “I’ll do what I can, but I won’t sit by and see Helen—”

“Oh, shut up, Ted! To use plain American, you make me tired. Go into the drawing room and be nice to your mother. Tell her what you have been doing. She’ll like to hear about the ten hours a day. You can pitch it strong.”

I looked up and saw Helen standing at the door. “Won’t you come into the drawing room, Ted? I think your mother expects you.”

“Come here, little girl,” my father said to Helen. She went and sat on his lap. “Can you manage that boy?”

Helen smiled at me and kissed her father-in-law by way of answer.

“You speak American, don’t you?”

Helen nodded her head vigorously.

“Well, will you please tell him to keep his hair on?”

Helen came to me with a laugh and caught me by the arm.

"Come, Ted."

I followed her meekly.

When we reached the drawing room, my sister said: "Mother has gone up to bed."

We kissed Frances good night and climbed to our own quarters. I went into my study to look out some of my old books. Upon my return I found Helen lying on her bed, sobbing.

"What is it, my love?"—I flew to her and whispered in her ear.

"Ted, darling—will you ever forgive me? I'm homesick."

She sobbed herself asleep in my arms that night. I lay awake, thinking of many things.

A week later the deadlock between my mother and me was still unbroken. Helen, however, was rapidly finding her feet in the joy of exploring London. We went the second evening of our homecoming to the Lyceum to see Henry Irving in *The Bells* and the next night to his *Charles I.* We lunched out, sometimes at Kettner's in Greek Street, Soho, or down in the City at Crosby Hall or at The Ship and Turtle. Helen could not get enough of riding on the tops of the busses. We used no other conveyance except for going to the theatres. We did a certain standard thing each morning, such as going to the Abbey, St. Paul's, or The Tower, and the rest of the time we rode or walked about without plan or purpose. It was enough to be in London—it mattered little where one went or why, there were marvels to be seen in any direction. We sat a lot in quiet old City churches, particularly in St. Bartholomew's in Smithfield. The restoration had not quite done for the simple majesty of its Norman pillars. I could see London literally soaking into Helen's blood. And she greeted the bookshops on Charing Cross Road like a discovery of old friends. We bought all the plays we could find in the sixpenny boxes.

We went out each day early in the morning and returned only in time to dress for dinner. The family were quiescent; no comment was made on our comings and goings, except the daily question whether we were to be expected at luncheon. My mother never said an unkind word to Helen, but she treated her with a stiff, formal politeness that resisted all advances. Frances, my sister, was in despair, not knowing with whom to side. She adored her mother and at the same time had always been a good pal of mine—as much of one, in fact, as the discrepancy in our ages had permitted. Once or twice she went out for the day with us, but our energetic sightseeing tired her out. She had been born in London and had never lived anywhere else, and its lions did not appeal to her as they did to Helen. Helen and Frances were already fast friends, wandering about the house in the mornings with their arms about each other or exchanging mysterious whispered conferences and giggles in their dressing gowns. They had reached at a bound the intimacy which involved borrowing each other's stockings, garters, and gloves. If Helen had felt homesick again, she said nothing about it.

Then at the end of the week my father requested me to see him in the library. I could tell from the way he was examining a pile of papers that he had something to say to me that he found difficult to express. He never smoked in the morning—a habit which was in itself a handicap.

“Ted,” he said at the conclusion of a few commonplaces, “I am sending you to Berlin tomorrow for a month.”

“What fun that will be for Helen,” I exclaimed, springing to my feet.

“Sit down—I haven’t finished.” I resumed my chair with an unpleasant foreboding. “I can’t afford to send Helen with you—you are going alone.”

“Hell!” I ejaculated impolitely. “You might have told me a few days ago.”

“I didn’t want to interfere with your first week.”

“What am I to do in Berlin?”

"I want you to learn a new chemical process we are going to handle. The money from the sale of the Deep Harbor factory has been entirely used to found a new company here. Until we get that on its feet we shall be rather hard-up. But we are playing for big stakes now, Ted. If this goes, you will be free to do as you please."

"I suppose I receive a salary."

"Not enough for you and Helen to live on—that's why you must live with us for the present. But I'll give you a ten per cent. interest in the new company, and it will be up to you to make it good. Meanwhile your salary is the nominal one of two pounds a week."

"But we can't go to the theatre on that," I exclaimed. It was rather a shock, for in Deep Harbor I had been well paid. "I can get a better job on my own."

"I have no doubt of it," replied my father. "Your chemical work is reported as expert. If you want to back out now and leave me in the lurch, go ahead."

I opened my mouth to speak—and paused. A recollection of my interview with Knowlton on this very subject crossed my mind. I heard him say—"play the skunk and leave you flat, Ted," On the other hand, what was my duty to Helen?

"We'll be paying dividends after the first twelve months, Ted. Then you'll be all right. Your interest in the company will be worth a lot of money."

"It's more or less of a gamble, I suppose?"

"All business is," said my father. "But I was flattering myself I had a son who had the grit to gamble for big stakes, and the brains to play the game."

"Damn," I said, getting up and walking about the room. My father began writing with an abominably scratchy nib.

"I ought to consult Helen," I turned and shot at him. He looked up from his letter and shrugged. The nib scratched on. "I told her I had excellent prospects when I married her—that Knowlton and I had made good with the Deep Harbor Manufacturing Company—" I paused in my argument, for

my father appeared to be ignoring my remarks. He began another letter.

"Take it or leave it, Ted," he said after another silence. "All I ask is that you let me know definitely by lunch time. If you don't go, I must send another chemist to Berlin. I've made you the best offer in my power. A father can't do more than that."

"I wish you could see my point of view."

"I see it perfectly. Facts, however, overrule a point of view. If I had the means, I'd set you free this minute. As I haven't, there is nothing to argue about."

"Facts are damned unfair."

"They are," agreed my father.

"If I put it up to Helen, she'll tell me, of course, to stick by you, no matter what the sacrifice."

"In that case I should decide for myself, if I were you. It's a poor plan to try to shift your responsibilities on to some other person."

I had a suspicion my father was secretly laughing at me. I had a knack of making the worst possible showing in a crisis.

"I want to be fair to you and to Helen," I exclaimed.

"I'm not impressed by heroics," my father answered coldly. "I don't think either of you is being very hardly used—you have a comfortable home offered you and a good opportunity to work for. I am not asking favours—I'm giving them."

In one sense this was, of course, strictly true; yet there was something to be said on my side. Nothing was to be gained by stating it; I therefore kept silent. Ten minutes more must have passed while I turned the problem over. My father imperturbably continued to write, address, and seal letters.

"Do you know which way I am going to decide?" I asked, curiosity getting the better of me.

"Frankly," my father replied, "I don't. I'm not bluffing, Ted. I have never understood you very well. We've always been good chums; still, I have known that inwardly you go your own gait."

"I don't think I have ever disobeyed an important command."

"No, I don't believe you have—perhaps I have never asked you to do anything I didn't think was for the best. You didn't like being sent to Deep Harbor. Are you sorry now you went?"

"You can't take the credit to yourself for Helen and make that into an argument," I said. "Logic has its limits."

"I never went to college, so logic doesn't bother me," my father smiled. It was the first time his face had relaxed since I came in.

"I'll go," I announced. My father opened a desk drawer and took out a bundle of papers.

"Here's your railway ticket—Harwich—Hook of Holland. You leave from Victoria. And here's your instructions and a letter of introduction to the Treptow Chemische Gesellschaft. When you know how to use the process you will be taught, come home. The quicker you learn, the quicker you get back. But you must know it thoroughly."

"Then you did think I'd accept," I remarked, rather indignant again.

"My dear boy, it never crossed my mind you would make a fuss. You took me entirely by surprise."

"I always seem to be wrong," I growled.

"But fortunately you often end up by doing right," my father smiled.

Helen was a brick. We talked the whole thing over, and she scolded me for having hesitated. Helen's scoldings were very affectionate affairs. She smiled and assured me she would be all right. It might be the best way to win my mother over, and so on. Besides she would do a thousand things with Frances and would write me every day. At the end I rang for Chitty and told him to pack enough things for a month's journey.

"Will you be playing golf, sir?" he asked. Helen squealed with delight from the bed, where she was sitting with her feet tucked under her.

"No—business, Chitty. No riding clothes."

"Very good, sir. Thank you."

Helen saw me off the next evening, accompanied by the family. Her eyes were swimming, but she didn't let go. She was the last to kiss me, after a formal kiss from my mother and a huge puppy embrace from Frances.

"Don't worry, Ted darling. I promise not to be homesick. I love you."

A guard most unceremoniously slammed the door between us. The train pulled out. I sat and swore nearly all the way to Harwich.

• • • • •
The month did not pass quickly, although I worked hard, for long hours. The process was intricate and complicated, quite beyond the range of anything I had done before. The German chemists did their best to help me, and at the same time made no secret of their contempt for my training.

Helen wrote amusing and cheerful letters, in which Leonidas and Frances chiefly figured. She spoke little of my mother, and only to reassure me that "everything was all right." I knew, therefore, that no progress had been made there. One piece of news, which I thought might possibly come, did not. That had been one of my chief anxieties over leaving Helen.

I saw a lot of Berlin and went nightly to cheap seats at the theatre. My experiences of this city are not, however, germane to this narrative. It was not until the middle of the fifth week of my stay that the Treptow Chemische Gesellschaft notified me that I had now performed the process successfully several times and was in a position to return to instruct others. I made one of the quickest trips to a telegraph office known to German history. From there to my hotel and on to the Bahnhof I at least equalled any existing record. Twenty-four hours later Helen was in my arms on the platform of Victoria Station.

The family were at dinner when we reached Kensington.

I hope Gabriel's trumpet is not timed for the dinner hour, for it is quite certain my mother will not allow even that to postpone her sitting down.

"Have you got it, Ted?" my father asked.

"What isn't in my head is in the bag upstairs," I replied.

Right after dinner Helen and I fled to our retreat, brutally closing the door in Frances's face. We sat on the floor before a fire and talked. Berlin and London—we compared notes until after midnight. As we were about to go to bed, Helen whispered:

"There's one thing more, Ted, I haven't told you."

And then came the big news I had been expecting while away.

"I just had to tell you yourself, darling. I didn't want to write it."

God! If anything should happen to my beloved! and I went sick and cold at the thought. But she did not know this fear, for I held her tight, kissing her eyes. We sat on before the fire, far into the night, talking of the new future this revealed, of the new wonder that had come into our lives.

"Edward Jevons, Junior," Helen murmured as she fell asleep on my shoulder.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

WE FIND NEW LIFE AND NEW LOVE

THE new factory was at Willesden Junction, which I reached regularly every morning by the 8.10 from Earl's Court Road, returning home to the little house in Kensington about seven. It was a long day, made longer by the railway journey at each end. The present equipment was on a comparatively small scale, future expansion depending largely on what it was to be hoped our laboratory could accomplish. Two young English chemists, graduates of a technical school, were assigned to work with me. The rest of the research staff included a machinist and pipe fitter, a general utility girl, a glass blower to make special apparatus, and Chitty.

The latter I ruthlessly took from his duties as general house man to do odd jobs for me. He gloried in his new work, for he had a positive awe of chemistry. To him it was the last word in the mysterious achievements of the educated human intellect. With his awe was a wholesome fear of possible eventualities. There was not a day that it wasn't his secret belief that we should all be blown to atoms. Nevertheless, on the rare occasions when minor accidents did occur, he was the first person I found standing at my elbow. I sometimes amused myself by devising harmless bangs or unexpected puffs of smoke, to see Chitty come on the run to my side. The day I really spilt some acid on myself, I thought the man would get his hands badly burned before I could stop him from tearing my clothes off. He was, however, like a perfectly trained dog. A sharp word of command brought him up all standing. I saved his hands

from serious burns and got out of my clothes without damage to myself.

"Chitty," I said another time, "if this place ever gets on fire you are to get out the first window without delay."

"Not until I see you going, sir, thank you," he replied. And he meant it.

On pleasant Saturday afternoons, during the early autumn, Helen came out to meet me. Chitty used to prepare my luncheons for me every day; on Saturdays he catered for two. His army training taught him to use any utensils handy, and Helen laughed until the tears came at finding his kitchen a series of Bunsen burners, his crockery mainly Meissen ware and Bohemian glass beakers. He could cook sausages and grill tomatoes fit for an epicure. It was true his range was strictly limited, being restricted to what might be put in a frying pan or plain boiled, but within its limits it was unexcelled.

Luncheon over, we would take the train back and prowl about for an hour or two before tea or see a matinee from the pit. Our finances made it necessary for us to keep to simple pleasures. Still, by saving all our pennies for Saturdays and Sundays we did ourselves surprisingly well. During the week the company paid for my railway ticket and luncheons. Thus the weekend found us with thirty or a few more shillings to spend. In those pre-war days two could do a lot in London on thirty shillings. For example, if we wished to be really extravagant and "go a bust" we lunched at Kettner's for 3/6 each, table d'hôte, total 7 shillings—a shilling for the waiter—eight; a bottle of table chianti, 3 bob; or eleven in all, leaving nineteen shillings over. Setting aside a half crown for tea, we still had 16/6. Suppose we went to a pit—half a crown apiece; total, 5 shillings—we yet were rich with eleven and six remaining. Plenty over for Sunday, especially if we took luncheon with us from home. We did not lack for clothes; Helen's trousseau would last a long time—and the next year the company was going to pay dividends.

Meanwhile there was one deep disappointment mixed with our improvident happiness. I had no time for writing or even for keeping in touch with my theatrical and literary friends. They had begun by dropping in at the house, never to find me at home, and in a few months a caller for us was rare. My absence in America had broken a good many threads, and there was no opportunity to spin new ones. The work and friendships we had planned to do and form together while riding over the hills of Deep Harbor could not be done and formed. I had to live and think chemistry. The evenings were rarely free, for laboratory reports of the day's work had to be prepared then. The week-ends were so precious that Helen and I could not spare them for anything but our own companionship.

Along with the first fogs, in November, I realized that the work at the laboratory was getting on slowly. I had not yet been able to begin quantity production. My father called one day to ask me to look over the special expenditures on behalf of research. He wanted to know if economies were not possible, and where I thought we were going. For many hours I reviewed the accounts and the results to date, as set down in the laboratory diary and reports. There was nothing to show on the side of practical accomplishments. The experiments gave evidence we were on the right track; it was equally clear we had not arrived. The German process worked well on a small scale with carefully selected chemicals; it did not work at all on a commercial scale.

"Well, Ted, what are we going to do about it?" my father inquired at the end of my survey. "My associates are getting restless; we have spent a great deal of money. What have we to show for it?"

I turned over my notes again, as one does in such cases, hoping some overlooked solution will leap from the pages.

"I am certain I can do it," I said.

"When? And how much will it cost?"

"That I can't say. It may be tomorrow—it may be next

month. The answer perhaps is filtering now in the next room, or it may be a question of several weeks' experiment."

"Not good enough, Ted."

"You told me it would be a year before you expected results."

"A year before we paid dividends. If you can't begin manufacture, how can you expect to make a profit? Your experiments have eaten a deep hole in our resources, and we are where we were at the beginning. In short, Ted, if you don't tell me you are ready to manufacture before the next three months are up, we'll have to close down."

"We might get one of the Germans over and let him have a look at what I'm doing." I went into the next room and came back with a sample. "Here is the stuff—I make it every day in there. But when it goes through in quantity downstairs, I can't get it."

"What are you doing about it?"

"Analyzing all our raw materials to see if I can trace the probable impurity that is blocking us. The apparatus downstairs has been tested and examined a dozen times. I can find nothing the matter there. I thought, at first, lubricating oil might be leaking into the mixers."

"Suppose you can't find the cause?"

I shrugged. "If the world comes to an end, there's not much good planning what you will do. There is a cause, and I've got to find it. There's nothing mysterious about it. Such matters are a problem of elimination. You must be careful not to overlook any possibility. In the end you run it down—corner it. But it may take time."

"Is there any possibility our German friends have done us?"

"I've thought of that. Yet if that is the case, why the devil does the stuff come out all right on a small scale? Here it is in my hand. There *is* such a thing. They haven't faked it—there it is."

"Will you write a special report tonight for me to show the board of directors tomorrow?"

"Yes. You still own the controlling interest, don't you?"

"Up till now I do," my father replied. "I may have to let that go, Ted, if you don't find the answer soon."

I gave up my Saturday afternoons and often my Sundays. The answer did not appear. All this was hard on Helen. The family tension did not tend to relax in the face of our difficulties at the factory. My own nerves were being stretched taut, and I had to fight to keep Helen from noticing too much the strain I was under. I laid off my two assistant chemists, to reduce expenses. Their help had never been valuable except for doing routine things. Occasionally, when there was an experiment on that couldn't be left unfinished, I worked at Willesden until late at night. It was Helen's calm faith in me that kept me at it and gave me self-control. I talked little with her—or with any one—about this damned problem, preferring, with her, to read and dream as we had always done; and I kept my mouth shut as far as possible before my father, to prevent his noting that I was badly frightened. Chitty realized that I had a facer. His anxiety was pathetic; I would look up from an experiment and find him watching my face eagerly, to see if now I had a ray of hope. Of course, Helen knew why I did not come home on Saturday afternoons, but her confidence kept her so optimistic she scarcely worried at all. I cursed German chemistry from A to Z before Chitty; elsewhere I was grimly silent on the subject.

My mother in no wise changed her attitude; Helen was treated with the formality of a guest, and I should have worried more than I did about this if I had not discovered by accident that she was closeted with Sims a great part of each day in her own room making baby clothes. Poor mother, how happy she could have made Helen by letting her know this! But she didn't. Helen sat all day working in her room on little things, and my mother in hers, and neither woman spoke to the other of what she was doing. "While I'm seeking answers to chemical riddles, I wish some one would explain to me the riddle of human nature," I thought

to myself. One night I decided to act on this idea and seek the latter answer for myself. I went to my mother's room.

"What do you wish, Ted?" she asked as I sat down. It had been a great many years since we had exchanged any confidences face to face. Her devotion to me had always alarmed me—it put me off when I came near her. I knew I didn't think as she thought, and I was afraid a misunderstanding hopeless to reconcile would come. It sounds paradoxical, I know—that I should fear her love to the point that I believed it dangerous—but so it was. "If we ever really quarrel," I had said to myself, "nothing on earth will patch it up." So it came about that for years I had avoided intimacy with her, preferring a queer aloofness to any attempt at understanding, since by nature we were such opposites.

"I shan't pretend, mother. It's about Helen," I said in answer to her question.

"What about Helen?" my mother replied coldly.

I wondered what to say. She sat there looking at me calmly, but there was a hardness in her expression which indicated that all defences were fully manned. "I'll make a mess of it—get the worst of it, I know, and go out of here thoroughly in the wrong," I said to myself. "But, damn it all, I ought to be able to think of the right thing."

"You wished to speak to me about Helen?"

"Helen likes you," I blurted out, at the same time realizing I had made the worst of all possible starts.

"She has only to tell me this herself." My mother's voice was level.

"Would it do any good?" I blundered on.

"I am sure I have not the least idea what you mean, Ted. I think it would be much better if you went up to your own room."

I began to be desperate. There ought to be some facial flag of truce, indicating unconditional surrender, that one could wave with a look. At that moment I would have given

anything, except Helen's love, to have my mother relent. Instead, she picked up a book and made an elaborate show of reading. I meditated flying into a childish rage, thus forcing the issue, but I was so truly hurt and angry I didn't dare. I knew I should probably say something I should afterwards regret. I got upon my feet.

"I am sorry you do not approve of my marriage, mother"—adding mistake number three to the two I was certain I had made.

"It is not for me to approve or disapprove of your marriage, Edward. I was not consulted. It is no affair of mine."

"Of course, you don't mean it," I said. "That remark is silly enough to have been made by me." I was quite appalled at my boldness, but anger was fast mastering me.

"I do not wish to have any further discussion with you on this subject, either now or in the future. Whatever else you learned in Deep Harbor, it wasn't manners."

"Rot!" I exclaimed. She lifted her eyebrows and turned a page. I stood a second irresolute. "I mean I didn't intend to be rude—you know what I mean—only you won't admit it."

"I don't expect an apology. Good night, Edward."

"Now you've done it, you blithering idiot," I said as I clumped upstairs to Helen. "I knew I'd end in the wrong." Helen gently told me, at the conclusion of my story, words to the same effect.

"Am I a blithering idiot, Helen dear?"

"No, sweetheart, you are just a boy," was Helen's exit line for this episode.

Our second Christmas together was drawing near, and it promised to be far different from the one we had looked forward to the year before. The factory problem was still unsolved; the building which my father had anticipated would be humming with prosperous activity stood silent. Only in

the laboratory upstairs was there any work being done, labour which still seemed but a beating of the air. I had called in more than one consulting chemist; they merely suggested that I do the things I had been doing. The advice from Germany was to the same effect. Analyze and search for the cause among the raw materials. I had outside analyses made on these, to check my own by, and no clue developed. The board of directors called upon me collectively and singly to offer the inane suggestions which non-technical men always make when they wish to be helpful over a technical matter.

A week before Christmas I sat staring at samples of my raw materials spread over the laboratory table. Chitty was rinsing test tubes at the sink.

"It does beat the devil, Chitty," I said, "to think that the answer to all our trouble is staring right at us from one of these heaps of samples, and we can't find it."

"Yessir," Chitty agreed. "Don't give up, sir; 'ave another try."

I looked at my watch. It was three o'clock; the short winter day was already dusk without. A London and North-western express screeched past our windows.

"I'd like my overcoat, please, Chitty. I'm going home." A queer, startled look came into his face.

"You're not giving up, Mister Edward? You won't tell them you're beaten? 'Ave another shot at your last experiment. I don't mind working late tonight, sir."

"Chitty," I said, "sometimes it pays to cut your losses and start afresh. We're up a blind passage. Let's turn round and walk out of it."

He helped me into my great coat with a doubtful air.

"Don't let them say it's done you in, sir," he said. "Come back tomorrow morning. You never know your luck, sir."

"I'll be here at the usual time, Chitty." And with this I left him.

My father, luckily, was in when I got back to Kensington.

I saw him studying me carefully as I came into the library and sat down. He laid aside his pipe and waited. I was in no hurry to begin speaking.

“Discouraged, Ted?” my father at last inquired.

“No. I’m through.”

“That sounds rather tragic, Ted. Just what do you mean?”

“I have been thinking this thing over. We’ve reached an absolutely blank wall. I can neither climb over it, tunnel under it, nor walk around it.”

“Facts, please,” my father interrupted. “Cut your rhetoric.” I gave him a brief recapitulation of my failure, together with my reasons for believing that it was no use going on doing the same useless experiments over and over again. He listened patiently, without giving any sign of emotion.

“It doesn’t make pleasant telling,” I ended, “to confess one has failed.”

“Have you your laboratory notebooks and diary here?”

“Yes,” I admitted, “but they won’t mean anything to you—they are mainly full of chemical formulae and abbreviated notes.”

“Nevertheless, I wish to see them.”

I went out to my bag in the passage and brought them in.

“I’m not a scientist, Ted, but it isn’t common sense that an experiment which you can do on a small scale should fail on a large scale. You have overlooked something.”

“Shall I stay and explain my notes to you?”

“No, go upstairs and talk to Helen.”

I came down to dinner very glum. Helen had done her best to buck me up; this time, however, even she had failed to restore my confidence. To my surprise, my father was all smiles, hinting the while at mysterious delights to come. I thought he was trying to cheer me up—an annoying thing to have any one do when one has resolved to be miserable.

“How would you and Helen like to have a little trip all by yourselves at Christmas—say to Winchester? It will do

Helen good, if you are careful not to let her get tired." This he had saved up for dessert. Helen and I stared at each other, not entirely certain he wasn't having a joke at our expense.

"I'm serious, children," he added. "Your mother and I—with Frances, of course—are going down to Hayling Island. I want to get in some golf."

"I thought we were hard up," I growled, not rid of my suspicions.

"Well, we've enough for that, I think, Ted. The plant will be running full blast in January."

I sat up. "What have found out from my notes? Don't deceive yourself, father."

He laughed uproariously. "Thanks for the advice. But, Ted, I'm an old newspaper man, and I spent a good many years finding out things I was not supposed to know about. When I went over your notes I observed something I think you have missed."

My face burned. If true, of course it meant I was a damned incompetent person to trust with a responsible job. I felt Helen's hand on my knee.

"It isn't your fault, Ted—don't look so melodramatic. Now listen to me. You have tested and analyzed all your raw materials—and have bought different lots of them from various sources?"

"Yes—I have been all over the market for them."

"But you have bought your most important reagent—a commercial acid—from only one particular firm. Did you analyze that acid?"

"No."

"I thought not. There was no record of it in your books."

The sensation of feeling an utter fool is not comfortable. It was the even pressure of Helen's hand on my knee that kept me from an outburst. The instant my father had asked me the question about the acid, I knew he had found the only untested link. But why in the name of all that is intelligent

had I missed it? Simply because I had been working on the set idea that the raw materials furnished contained somewhere an impurity, and I had taken the reagent on faith.

"Well," my father called out gaily, "is the old man right?"

"You are right, and I have been wrong."

"Damn it, Ted, don't be so ridiculous with that long jaw. It's all in the family. Take a week off with Helen and come back fresh to your job. You went a bit stale, that's all."

"My going stale has cost you a lot of money," I muttered.

"Experience always costs money, Ted. I don't grudge paying for it, if one really learns from it. You told me something about the process of elimination once. The next time you eliminate, go all the way."

"The consulting chemists we called in didn't find the trouble."

"No, they were experts, like you."

I smiled at this, because I knew I deserved it.

"That's better, Ted," my father said when he saw me smile. "The whole trouble has been that you lost your sense of humour over this job. Don't lose it again."

"Suppose," I said at bed-time that evening, "that we find nothing the matter with the acid?"

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. Now you and Helen pack up in the morning, clear out for a week, and I'll have the acid examined while you are away."

Upstairs, I sat before our study fire without daring to look at Helen. She stopped brushing out her hair and perched on the arm of my chair, putting her cheek against mine.

"What do you want me to say, Ted?"

"If you speak the truth you'll say that you have married an incompetent fool who messes up everything he tries to do."

"Don't let it hurt you so, Ted, darling."

"It was my job to find out, and I didn't. You can't get away from that."

Helen rumpled my hair pensively. Each of us had several

things to say; the difficulty was to say them. Helen went on silently stroking my head.

"I try to think—why the devil does it always seem afterwards as if I hadn't thought at all?"

I proposed this conundrum to her. Helen gave me her hand to kiss.

"I won't be so stupid as to try to make excuses for you," said Helen, tucking up snugly against my shoulder. "Let's own up honestly we made a mistake, Ted. For I must be to blame somewhere, too. Yes, Ted dear—I know it. Don't go on shaking your head. It isn't comfy. We mustn't make a mistake like this again—that's all. It isn't like us."

"It wasn't just a case of putting my foot in it, sweetheart. I went and sat down in the spilt milk."

Helen laughed gently. "Poor old boy, your pride has had a nasty knock, hasn't it? So has mine, dear."

I thought this over in silence. We were young enough to take each other tragically. But I had my first doubt as to whether I was of heroic stuff—I mean that for the first time I wondered if success were inevitably mine. Suppose I was only a commonplace person who got along amiably enough, yet never pulled off anything big? In that case all the hopes Helen had in me would prove to be vain dreams. Then what would happen? Would she love me then—or didn't love demand the heroic? It was Knowlton who had made Deep Harbor a success, and now my father had stepped in and saved me again. Where was the missing cog in my mechanism? What could I do—what ought I to do—how could I find out?

"It isn't your fault, hubby-boy," Helen said, her face against mine. "You aren't meant to be a chemist. Your father has had you learn a profession which at best is no more than a secret anxiety to you. It haunts you with a never-ending fear, because it is not really your work. It's only a part you are trying to play to please him."

I sat up straight and stared at her.

"I've watched you every day, Ted, sweetheart, during these

months we have been together—and I have seen you struggling to fight down that fear of failure in you. You've tried to hide it from me, dearest”—she smiled and shook a finger at me—“you can't fool me, because I love you. I've wanted to tell you I knew, and I was afraid, if I did, you couldn't work at all.”

“Well,” I said slowly, “it's true. I hate chemistry—and I have always hated it—or is it only work I hate?”

Helen shook her head: “We must get to your real work, Ted, as soon as we can. There is your toy-theatre all ready for you on top of the bookcase. We'll begin writing for it, dear. When the company is all right, we'll give up chemistry forever and begin for ourselves.”

I stood up and drew her to me under the light. I took her face in both my hands, turned it toward mine, and looked into her grey eyes.

“Do you still love me, Helen?”

She closed her eyes. “So much, Ted, it hurts and hurts clear down in me.” Her hands clutched my shoulders until the skin grew white over her finger knuckles. . . .

It is not possible that two persons could have been any happier than Helen and I were during Christmas week at Winchester. Others may have equalled our happiness; no couple have surpassed it. Not only was it the first time we had been by ourselves since on board the steamer, but also Winchester itself, as that very Camelot we had made up stories about in the woods back of Deep Harbor, was to us a speechless delight. I had not been there before, and thus its quaintness was as new to me as to Helen. We ate and slept in a hotel somewhere off the High Street. The rest of the time (despite the oncoming event of Edward Jevons, Junior) we wandered about or sat in the nave of the long bare cathedral. Helen actually got as far afoot as the summit of St. Catherine's hill. We took a fly and drove out to St. Cross, where we designed a new dream cottage from its

mediaeval gables and timbers. The same faithful fly conducted us to other delights when I thought Helen had walked enough. There are more things in Winchester than can be set down, save in the book of memory. Jane Austen's house, the cathedral, the school, the river Itchen where old Izaak Walton fished—one can go on for a long time wandering among mysteries and dreaming. We grew technical over architecture and had an argument about it with a verger in the cathedral. On the High Street we likewise discovered a satisfactory second-hand book-shop containing a lot of theatrical memoirs. Joys of joys, we bought ourselves as a Christmas present Bell's British Theatre, complete with all the plates! To be sure, it was but a shilling a volume; yet no collector ever walked out of Christie's more proud than we. Forty shillings had been set aside for Christmas recklessness. Bell and his collection of plays made quite a hole in this, even at only a shilling a volume.

On the night before Christmas there was a telegram from my father. The trouble had been successfully located in the commercial acid; there was no doubt that with pure acid the trouble of manufacturing would be cleared up. More good news was to come next morning. There was a letter from Deep Harbor containing a present of one hundred dollars for Helen, as well as the announcement that her father purposed, from this time forth, to give his daughter one hundred dollars a month pocket money.

"Ted, Ted!" she cried, pouring her letter and its contents into my lap, her eyes dancing, "we can get all the books we want! See here! And we'll have five more pounds of our own to spend on our week-ends."

Curiously enough, it did not cross the mind of either of us that we could possibly have any other use for that money. Perhaps we had been badly brought up, both of us—I don't know. At any rate we always had a lot of fun out of our extravagance. And on this morning, as soon as we could get there, we furiously rang the doorbell of the bookshop, in spite of the closed shutters. We knew we could rout the

old codger, the owner, out, if we made noise enough, for he lived over his shop. He grumbled at first; then, when he found us equipped to buy, cheerfully let us in. No, we did not spend all of the twenty pounds, but we made a good hole in that, too. He had a rather good *Memoirs of Charles Matthews*, extra-illustrated. It was a new kind of pleasure for us to own such a wanton luxury as that.

A day or two after Boxing Day we returned to London. Going up in the train, I said: "Well, Lady Grey Eyes, the second Christmas didn't turn out so black as we'd painted it, did it?" Helen simply looked things at me.

"They'll all be as wonderful as this one, dear," I added,

Helen's eyes clouded. "Don't say it, Ted! Don't!" and she touched the wood of the railway carriage beside her. We were alone in the compartment, so my reply may be imagined.

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It was some time in the spring that a trained nurse came to live with us in the little house in Kensington. Her advent set the whole household bustling over the preparations for the expected arrival of Edward Jevons, Jr. It was my mother who insisted upon Helen's having a nurse, long before the day was due, although she still maintained her attitude of being officially polite to Helen and almost ignoring my existence. I had not yet atoned for my fatal attempt at setting matters right. Things were going swimmingly at the factory. I was naturally busy enough, for I had to train the whole staff, with the result that production was not yet on a large scale. But what we were making was right, orders were coming in, and every week I was able to report increased production. Chitty was one smile as he watched me whistling at my work.

Helen and I were now under no worry or anxiety concerning the event to befall her. The doctor was cheery, Helen's health and physique were splendid; the trained nurse kept a sharp lookout. Our only regrets were over the interruptions of our week-ends and the presence of the con-

founded nurse always under foot. A stranger in one's household, on an intimate footing, is a supreme test of one's forbearance. It must also be quite a test for the stranger. This nurse was willing, capable, and good-humoured; yet there were times when Helen and I wished her elsewhere. She packed Helen off to bed at nine; Helen and I were accustomed to sitting up till all hours, talking or reading in the study. She frowned upon the theatre and forbade the pit altogether, although, now Helen and I were in funds, that prohibition did not worry us so much. We were not permitted to dine of a Saturday night at the Café Royal or have luncheon at Kettner's. Indeed, Helen's diet was prescribed for her—a great hardship, as neither of us liked "wholesome" food and things that "were good" for you. I had to feed Helen chocolates on the sly. My own movements were curtailed, because it was no fun doing things without Helen. Not for worlds would I have bought an old book unless Helen were along to share in the joy of the purchase.

About Edward Jevons, Junior, and his future we talked very little. We were, ridiculous as it sounds, a little shy about him and, again, we thought the whole idea of our having a baby of our own the biggest joke imaginable. It did seem too absurd.

"Ted, I simply can't imagine a baby! I'm not sure I want one interfering with us, dear. Isn't it dreadful?"

I couldn't imagine one, either, looking at Helen sitting there before the fire in a dressing gown with her hair down, to please me. She looked almost like a baby herself. Her face was still, with all its grave and tender beauty, the face of a school-girl. I think the nurse was shocked at our behaviour. She used to lecture us on the care and rearing of infants. I gathered from her that it was a task of more complexity than we had realized.

"I suppose they *will* get colic?" I ventured, as a contribution to the discussion one day. I had loosed the flood. The nurse insisted upon showing me a medical book full of disgusting pictures, containing an absolutely terrifying account

of the things that could, would, and did happen to babies. Helen had to rescue me. It had been in vain for me to protest that I should always send for a doctor. My protests went unheeded until Helen spared me further details.

There came a day when the doctor remained after his morning call, and I found myself banished from Helen's bedside. Nor could I get at my study, because that opened off Helen's room. I had time only to kiss Helen hurriedly, tell her to be game, and glance at a bassinette which had been placed in the room. The nurse was moving about in her room, and Frances had been sent away to visit some friends. The house was impossible; and yet I couldn't go out to the factory at Willesden. I was driven to reading a political leader in *The Times*. The country appeared to be in a bad way, judging from what I read, so that didn't cheer me up. I felt somehow that I ought to have profound emotions. Instead, I was worried fearfully about Helen and wanted her. I could not bear to think of pain.

Once or twice the doctor came downstairs. He seemed, however, to consider brusqueness the proper professional attitude. The nurse was worse, for she told me not to "bother" her, when I asked her about Helen. She refused to take a note up to Helen, although all I had written was "love—Ted" on a slip of paper. There was only Sims, my mother's maid, to sympathize with me, and I strongly suspected her sympathy was tinged with dislike for the nurse. Sims had refused one morning to carry up hot water for the nurse. My mother had promptly squelched that incipient revolt.

"I 'ates them as gives themselves airs in other people's 'ouses," had been Sims' verdict on the nurse. "Fancy 'er speakin' like that to you, Master Ted, when it's you givin' 'er employment! Stuck up, I calls it. That's wot it is."

"You mustn't quarrel with the nurse, Sims. It would make trouble for Mrs. Ted and the baby," I felt it my duty to say.

"Quarrel!" exclaimed Sims; "not likely! Not with 'er. I

wouldn't stoop to give 'er that much satisfaction"—and Sims reported elsewhere in answer to a bell.

The nurse and I faced each other alone at luncheon; my mother ate in her room, ministered to by Sims. It was a painful meal. I was not hungry, and I could think of nothing at all appropriate to say to my companion. She ate copiously—three glasses of milk I saw her swallow with my own eyes. I must have been staring at her noticeably, for she said: "I shan't get much sleep tonight, I expect. I need to save my strength." I could not explain to her that drinking milk always set up a barrier between me and the person who did it. She would not understand. It was the nurse who gave me the knockout blow, upon leaving the table.

"It's no good worrying about your wife, Mr. Jevons. They all do it over the first child. You'll soon get used to it, after a few more," and she hurried upstairs. I was tempted to pursue her to argue this. What sort of programme did she imagine that Helen and I were embarked upon? "At least, now I come to think of it," I said to myself, "Helen and I have never discussed this." More than one baby?—the thought followed me about the room. How utterly preposterous. H'm. I sat down in a chair by the window. The idea was overwhelming. I had always thought of Helen and me as two persons going through life together. We had accepted, without yet realizing at all what it meant, one amendment to our original plan. But the nurse had conjured up the image of an indefinite sequence. Clearly, it was unthinkable. Yet I was startled to consider how many persons in this world had more than one baby. There was my sister—making two in this very house. Chitty had six. Examples multiplied themselves before me. "Helen, of course, shall decide this," was the rather unexpectedly sensible conclusion I finally arrived at. It was, nevertheless, a disturbing thought that the nurse had suggested.

My father and mother went out to dinner by themselves, after asking me for news. None had come. The doctor

urged me to "clear out for a bit." The house was really intolerable. "Come back about ten, if you like," he said. I tried to walk to Piccadilly. The task was impossible; my knees were too shaky. I took a hansom to the Café Royal and sat there drinking coffee and Benedictine. The waiter brought me a French comic paper. My sense of humour was not equal to it. At half past nine I bought Helen some violets at the expensive little flower stall on the way out. Its flowers were probably intended for *demi-mondaines*—at least, the price indicated that fact—but the violets had as yet suffered no contamination. "It will make Helen smile," I thought, "when I tell her where I got them and with what a knowing air the yellow-haired vulture behind the counter sold them to me." At the bookstall I got Helen some French papers and the Paris New York *Herald*. I hesitated over chocolates—there was no likelihood, I reflected, of running the night's blockade with them. Instead, I went back into the café and had the waiter wrap me up a bottle of green Chartreuse. Helen loved it. "*C'est pour une malade*," I told the waiter. He grew sympathetic at once, suggesting jellied bouillon in glass. I took a pint of it, as well as a truffled *pâté* of chicken, "*en aspic*." The waiter scratched his head, but could think of nothing more. I gave him half a crown for himself, while the dignified doorman called me a hansom.

It was after ten when I arrived at Kensington. Still no news. I did not dare ask the nurse to take my gifts up to Helen. Besides, Helen preferred to have me give her things with my own hands. My mother had retired; soon after, my father went. I sat down to wait. I smoked many pipes, striving to keep awake. Sims, faithful soul, brought me a bottle of stout with a plate of biscuits on her way to bed. Twelve, one, two o'clock came. The house was quiet. Two or three times I dozed off, to awake with a start. My pipe failed me at last, and I fell asleep in my father's favourite arm-chair.

I was aware that some one was shaking me violently by

the shoulder. I opened my eyes, blinking, wondering what had happened. I saw the nurse standing over me. Realization returned with a rush. I started to my feet, terrified.

"Mr. Jevons, you have a daughter," she said. "Mrs. Jevons is all right and can see you presently."

"A d-daughter?" I stammered, not able to assimilate this statement in my dazed condition.

"Yes, Mr. Jevons, it's a girl. Eight pounds—a normal baby."

The nurse immediately left the room, not pausing to answer any further questions. "A daughter," I thought—"but we haven't got a name for a girl! What will we call it?" Helen had been so confident it would be Edward Jevons, Junior! I paced up and down the room. A few minutes more brought the doctor, all smiles, his brusqueness vanished. He warmly shook my hand, telling me I could go upstairs for a short visit. I hastily gathered together my presents for Helen and dashed for her room. The nurse intercepted me at the door to slow me down. I entered on tiptoe. There lay Helen in bed, looking more beautiful than I had ever dreamed, a little smile of welcome on her lips. I laid the violets on her, but the nurse snatched the other things away from me. She had, however, the tact to leave us. I kneeled beside the bed and held Helen's hand. We looked at each other. I kissed her gently on the mouth.

"Ted," she whispered, "it's a girl."

I nodded. "I ought to feel sorry, Ted, but I don't." I nodded again.

"Our baby, Ted. Ours. Just think!"

I kissed her, and then she put my hand against her cheek. I leaned close and whispered things that made her smile.

"What shall we call it, Ted?"

"There is only one name for our baby—and that is Helen." She looked wonderfully at me, her eyes shining.

"You want to call it that, Ted darling?"

I nodded and kissed her. The nurse entered.

"Time's up, Mr. Jevons. You can look in again after breakfast. I do believe you haven't seen the baby!"

Helen and I looked guiltily at each other. The nurse brought a tiny bundled-up object for my inspection.

"It doesn't look like either of us," I said, rather taken aback by its appearance.

"Did you ever see such a red creature!" Helen giggled.

The nurse was deeply shocked. I winked at Helen. The nurse laid the baby at her mother's breast. I stood for a moment, a queer feeling inside me at this sight. Then I bent over Helen again.

"I love you both, sweetheart."

The nurse drove me from the room.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

WE BEGIN TO LIVE

TOWARD the end of the summer we were all prospering. The factory business was coming up to expectations, the new baby was developing into a lusty child, and even my mother had ceased to be openly antagonistic. She was not entirely cordial, and she still kept a certain distance between herself and Helen—a distance which, strangely enough, also included Helen's baby; nevertheless, there were occasions when she seemed to forget her attitude. We spent several week-ends in the country as a family, and no incident occurred to disturb either Helen or me.

In fact, the prosperity and good nature were so general that once or twice Helen and I slipped away to look at little houses in the suburban country. We found the very thing we wanted at a small village in Hertfordshire, not far from St. Albans. It was a modern house, but it had a red-tiled roof and a pleasant garden of its own. "Ten minutes from the station," the agent said. He was a brisk walker. Helen went into raptures over the interior. She counted up seven bedrooms, four on the second, three above. "Just the right number," she announced. It was a surprise to me that seven bedrooms were our lucky quota. I was rather vague about bedrooms, never having thought out how many we should need. Downstairs there was a sitting-room, a dining-room, another room, the kitchen, and what the agent, once more, referred to as "the usual offices." There was a porcelain bath, so shiny and white that had we had any money the matter would have been settled then and there.

We went back to Kensington with the news of our discovery. After hearing the price—for the property was a

freehold—my father inquired if it was actually what Helen and I really wanted. We assured him it was.

“Very well,” my father overwhelmed us by saying; “if you want it, you shall have it.”

He and my mother, it appeared, were going to Paris for a year, partly for the sake of my sister’s education. They had already decided to give up the Kensington house, leaving Helen and me on our own. Our plans fitted in with theirs.

“You may call the house a belated wedding present,” my father said.

In due time the agent and solicitors from far and near brought their endless papers, my father wrote out a check, we all signed our names a great many times, and the house was ours. Nor did my father’s generosity stop there. Another check was handed to Helen. My father told her to furnish the house as well as she could with it. That evening Helen and I sat up half the night, making out lists of things. I wrote them down and Helen thought them out. Pots and pans seemed extraordinarily numerous. We were interrupted only by the younger Miss Helen demanding nourishment.

For the next two weeks we trudged up and down Tottenham Court Road shopping. Such discussions and arguments as Helen had with shop assistants; such checking of catalogues and comparing of prices! I suggested getting a lump price on the whole thing from one shop, thus simplifying the process. My commonsense suggestion was emphatically vetoed. It simply wasn’t done that way—not when one furnished a house. I rather liked to sit on the edge of a counter and listen to Helen bullying young shopmen. I marvelled at her persistence, to say nothing of her obstinacy in getting them around to her demands. She accepted no provisos and exceptions. The daily struggle would have worn me out; she returned to it fresh each morning, armed at all points cap-a-pie. Each evening we laid plans for the action of the following day. We were buying the minimum of furniture; the rest we hoped to pick up second-hand, old cottage tables and the like. We did, as a matter of fact, make one or two by-excursions down

the Fulham Road to see the antique shops. We found the owners of these shops, however, too canny for our purposes. They fancied that Helen and I were American tourists and stuck their prices up accordingly.

The family listened with obvious amusement, during dinner each night, to our adventures and progress. They offered no advice, nor did we seek any, for we wanted to do it alone. Occasionally Helen and my mother conferred over the contents of the kitchen. Not everything bore the same name as in America. Helen had to ask what the English equivalents were.

Coming out of Kettner's one day in Soho, I observed a fascinating row of copper sauce-pans hanging in a smelly little French shop. I made Helen's growing equipment a present of this addition. "You can do me a *poussin sauté, gran'mère, en casserole*," I explained. It was Helen's turn to look a little vague.

We set the first of October as the date on which we hoped to move in. We were having the walls done and a kitchen range installed. Time was no object whatever to the group of men who had taken over these two jobs.

"Probably," I said to Helen, "they are enjoying a summer in the country."

"I hope they don't remain over for the hunting," she answered, thereby proving that she had begun to read *Punch* to some purpose.

The day actually did come at last. We sent off one van load from Kensington, said good-bye until next Sunday to the family, bundled nurse and the baby into a one-horse omnibus, and, accompanied by Chitty as general handy man, drove off for Euston. Our village was on the London and Northwestern.

We no longer had the trained nurse, of course, but a plain ordinary everyday nurse, who, according to Helen, was most unscientific. Helen had been reading up in that abominable book on the horrors of babies. I wanted to

show baby the horse, but Helen informed me the child was as yet quite unable to appreciate the privilege.

All this by the way. We were more excited over the journey to our new home than we had been on our wedding-day. We were now definitely for ourselves.

"No one to care if I spill pipe ashes on the rugs," I said. I judged from Helen's reception of this that my illustration of liberty was not well-chosen. "I mean," I went on, to make amends, "that you will be at home in your own house, able to do just as you like." This was clearly a much better example of my thought.

We went first class, because of the baby. Helen thought first-class carriages would have fewer germs in them. It had an added advantage: we had the compartment to ourselves, except for the nurse. Chitty went third.

At the station Chitty highly incensed the only porter by taking charge of all our luggage. In some miraculous fashion he also packed us all into one fly, seating himself beside the driver. We drove up to our new home in state, Helen and I hand in hand, the baby cooing from the nurse's shoulder.

Inside we found a solitary representative of the kitchen-range-and-decorating crew, who informed us that he had not as yet been able to "connect the range," but that this would certainly be accomplished in two or three days. Until then we could not build a fire in it or do any cooking. Helen and I sat down on our luggage for a counsel of war over the situation. Should we send nurse and the baby back to Kensington? It was Chitty who solved the problem.

"I beg pardon, sir," he said, touching his forelock, "but I could build a bit of fire in the back garden, sir, and do the cooking on that."

Helen and I leaped at the proposal. It was the very thing! Nurse made it evident she did not approve it. We overruled her, and I gave Chitty immediate instructions to prepare luncheon. He took a box of matches and a frying pan and stepped outside.

Soon the vans arrived, for they had left town early in the morning. There also came a cook and a housemaid, engaged a month ago from a local employment agency. The cook's indignation at the condition of the range knew no bounds. She was not pacified by being shown Chitty hard at work in the garden. The smoke from his camp fire had already attracted the attention of two or three female neighbours. Helen's tact disposed of the cook for the time being. I went out to see how Chitty was getting along.

"What are we eating, Chitty?"

"Sausages and fried tomatoes, sir," he answered with the customary salute.

"Mind you do enough for the lot of us," I instructed him.

"Very good, sir."

I carried a deal table into the dining room, for the regular furniture was mostly in a chaotic pyramid on the pavement in front. Helen found knives, forks, and plates. The housemaid appeared to be paralyzed by circumstances. She was of little or no assistance. So it was that, amid gales of laughter from Helen, we sat down to the first meal under our own roof.

"The devil of it all is," I philosophized to her, between bites, "that nothing in this world ever turns out as one has imagined it will. Now, the number of times we have pictured ourselves eating our first dinner in our own home—"

"But what oceans more fun it is, like this," Helen interrupted.

"There is a great deal in your point of view, lady with the nice eyes," I agreed, carving her a wedge of bread from a household loaf. "What do you think, littlest Helen?" I added, turning to the baby, who sat, a solemn spectator, on nurse's lap.

"Now, Ted, please don't stir the baby up when she's being good," Helen cautioned. She always said that if I approached the child.

"When," I asked with mock irony, "will my daughter reach

such an age of discretion that I may be permitted to converse with her?"

"You are being silly, Ted. If you'll promise to carry her about afterwards until she stops howling, you can speak to her now."

"I refuse your terms, and repudiate the vile implied slander," I returned, winking at the younger Helen. I believe the child sided with me. I poured myself a glass of stout and solemnly drank the baby's health. She continued to stare at me, not displeased.

"Ted, you dear idiot," exclaimed Helen, jumping up and kissing me in defiance of the nurse's presence.

"You have stout on your lips—serve you right," I said to the now retreating Helen. She scrubbed her face violently with a handkerchief no bigger than a postage stamp.

"Men are disgusting creatures."

"They are," I mused; "yet women love them." I drank deep of the stout.

"Ted, I'll shake you if you don't behave." She made a series of cabalistic signs at me, which, I took it, had reference to nurse. "It's time for baby's nap."

"Coward woman," I ejaculated, "you are afraid of me."

"Will you walk up to the nursery and set up the baby's crib?"

"Not unless I am paid in advance."

Helen hastily dabbed a kiss on my cheek. "Now, Ted, please!"

"I obey, Omphale. Call in Chitty."

"Call him in yourself," was Helen's parting shot.

Chitty and I laboured some time setting up beds, beginning with the crib in the nursery. Though the heavens were to fall, the baby had to have a nap at precisely two o'clock every afternoon. We were interrupted once by Helen, who reported that cook, housemaid, and nurse alike had refused point blank to eat any of Chitty's cooking. It ended by our sending them all off to a public house, near the station, where food was obtainable,

"An ominous look-out until we get that range going," I growled.

"I wish we had a Polish girl from Deep Harbor," was Helen's comment after her first run-in with English servants.

"I had rather have a Pole from Deep Harbor than an American from Warsaw," I amended.

"That is nonsense, Ted," Helen said.

"It isn't, if you think it over," I replied.

Chitty and I resumed setting up beds. At the end of the first hour I paused. My face was moist.

"Chitty," I observed, "living is composed of a great many details. Take a bed, for example. You find them in lots of rooms, looking harmless enough. It is only when you analyze them, or, more correctly speaking, synthetize them—if that is, in fact, the word—that you realize their complexity."

"Yessir," said Chitty. "It's 'ard work for a gentleman, I dare say."

"Then dare say so no longer. On with our task."

"Very good, sir."

Gradually we reached the top of the house and the end of the infernal job. Helen appeared again. "Do we have tea?" she asked.

"How long since is it, madam," I asked sternly, "that afternoon tea became a necessity in your life? Shall we tolerate this aping of foreign customs?"

"I can easily make the madam a cup of tea, sir," Chitty cut in, a shade of anxiety in his tone.

"Then let the madam have her tea," I answered, "since her throat burns."

"Ted," said Helen, as Chitty disappeared, "how am I going to have any discipline among the servants if you persist in making a damn fool of yourself in their presence?"

"A what, madam?" I inquired.

"A damn fool," said Helen firmly.

"You shall pay dear for that, madam," I exclaimed, seiz-

ing her. It was several minutes later that we went back to our dining room for tea, our arms about one another like a Bank holiday couple at Hampstead Heath.

Chitty provided a tin of tea, black as Cimmerian darkness. The furniture had by now been removed from the pavement and piled in smaller individual pyramids in each room.

"It looks absolutely hopeless, Ted," said Helen, shuddering over a taste of Chitty's tea, as well she might. "Shall we ever get settled?"

"I am so comfortable," I replied, "that it is a matter of complete indifference to me. Let's live as we are."

At this moment a surprise arrived. The family, whether suspecting the result of our first day's housekeeping, or out of sheer good will, had sent us a large hamper of food from Fortnum and Mason's. There was a bottle of champagne to give the final glow. No need for Chitty to cook any more that day. We summoned him from his tea. I verily believe he had consumed two quarts of that brew of his—proof positive that the British army is made of stern stuff, "hearts of oak and tummies of copper," Helen ventured.

"Sailors, my dear—for hearts of oak—not soldiers," I corrected.

"I'm right about the tummies," Helen rebutted stubbornly. . . .

"Chitty," I commanded, "this room must be set right. The madam dines here tonight."

"Very good, sir." Chitty saluted, not a trace of a smile visible. In half an hour he had done wonders. Its normal appearance three quarters emerged from the confusion left behind by the van men.

We set the hamper in the centre of our gate-legged table, Helen's especial pride. Real ones were even then becoming hard to pick up. Helen lighted the candles herself, refusing to hear of gas or of assistance. There followed a feast. Cold pheasant, boned turkey, *fonds d'artichaut*, bottled asparagus d'Argenteuil, cakes and wine jellies, with champagne to top

it all off. We made our own coffee over a spirit lamp.

With the third glass of champagne I was all for bringing the younger Helen down from the nursery, as we called it, to respond to her health. On this point her mother was immovable. The child's slumber was not disturbed.

"Madam"—I arose, addressing my wife—"once more permit me to point out to you that this is not at all like the first dinner we once planned."

"I think you have had enough champagne, Ted," was the woman's irrelevant response. "Let's give the last glass to Chitty."

"An excellent idea and a kindly thought, worthy of your woman's heart."

Once more Chitty was summoned. His eyes stared amazement when I poured him a glass of champagne.

"Thank you, sir. Thank you, madam," and he tossed it off with a neat jerk of his head. Meanwhile Helen made him up a heaping plate of food from the hamper.

"Thank you, madam."

He went out, carrying his ration carefully. We finished our coffee sitting on a rug before the fire, Helen tucked up comfortably against me.

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We made heroic efforts all the week to get the house settled by Sunday. Chitty came out by train each morning to perform prodigies of strength in placing furniture. Our eagerness to be ready by Sunday was owing to the fact that we had invited the family to spend the day with us. Helen was extremely nervous about the critical eye she knew my mother would cast over our housekeeping. Poor Helen had never kept house before, let alone in a land where many ways and customs were still strange to her. We drew up the plan for dinner a dozen times, trying to include things that would please my mother's taste and rejecting everything we feared was doubtful.

We explored the shops in the village, choosing a butcher, a

grocer, a greengrocer, and a fishmonger after minute investigation. There was also the question of the baby's milk. The milkman, who took Helen's searching inquiries rather light-heartedly, finally told her he would "earmark" one special cow for her.

"What on earth did he mean by that, Ted?" she said, as we pursued our way up the High Street. "Will he brand the cow in the ear so he can tell her from the others?"

I leaned against a convenient lamp-post to laugh. Helen grew quite indignant.

"Ted, you are making an exhibition of yourself in the public street!"

"I'm sorry, dear," I apologized. "But you conjured up a vision in my mind of that good English yoeman swinging on to his broncho in the early dawn to ride forth and rope your cow, while the Mexican peons dash up with the branding irons—and all for a cow's ear."

"It may all be very funny," Helen snorted, "but I really think baby's milk is more important than your silly idea of humour."

It was not often that we failed to agree on a laugh.

"What is the joke, Ted?"

"The milkman, my dear, has been reading the speeches of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He is quoting a favourite phrase—that a certain item of revenue has been earmarked for a particular purpose. Thus he thought it good to earmark his cows. It's awful, my dear, when a joke has to be explained."

"I don't think it was much of a joke, now you have explained it," said Helen.

"Probably not," I agreed. "But you put it to a very severe test. It would have to be a remarkable joke to survive an analytical lecture."

"You are as clumsy as an elephant this morning, Ted."

We left the joke at that.

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By Sunday we had established some sort of order and routine in the house. Not all the curtains were up, an omission which gave Helen distress. Curtains up, it appeared, was one of the first tests of housekeeping ability. There was no rug for the dining room. Otherwise we felt we had done rather well, as we surveyed our preparations. From now on we should have to manage without Chitty, who was to return Monday to his work at the Willesden factory.

Taking stock of our situation, we agreed that the sitting room would pass inspection. There was not much furniture in it, because we hoped later to pick up one or two good bits for it. It had, nevertheless, curtains and comfortable chairs. The extra room downstairs was our study, with all our books—a decent lot, too—around the walls. It also contained a good mahogany desk with over-shelves—but there were no curtains here. The dining room was likewise nearly done, save for the rug. Upstairs our bedroom and the nursery were complete; only the guest room remained to be furnished. The odd bedroom was to be turned into a laboratory for me; as yet nothing had been done to it. On the top floor the cook and housemaid lived in solitary state with an extra empty room between them. Such was the result of our final look around before the family was due.

They arrived about twelve, driven up by the station fly, which worthily upheld all the conservative traditions of village cabs. Napoleon might well have driven from the field of Waterloo in it.

Frances was the first to rush forward to greet us, dashing into the house like a Newfoundland puppy that has just been let off its leash. My father and mother followed more sedately. Helen took my mother upstairs, while Frances was running all over the place on her own, poking into everything. My father sat down in the study and got out his pipe.

“Satisfied, Ted?” he asked, as he began to consume matches.

"Yes, sir," I answered. "I can't imagine what more one could want."

"End of the chapter, eh, Ted?"

"With the addition of 'and they lived happily ever afterwards.'"

My father took a wire and ran it through the stem of his pipe.

"About the future which you have just mentioned. Your mother and sister will be on the Continent probably for several years. I shall be with them a good deal of the time. I am going to make you a director in the company to look after my interests and your own. That will not, however, take much of your time. You'll be free therefore, to do whatever you wish. I am definitely putting you and Helen on your own feet. If you need advice or help, you know where to turn—otherwise, go ahead and run your own show."

Any reply I might have made was cut short by Helen's entrance with my mother. My father joined us in a solemn visit to the whole house. The nursery received the closest inspection. Nurse was holding a very pink and well scrubbed baby, dressed in her Sunday best. The crib was ordered nearer the window; that was the only flaw discovered in what Helen and I felt to be the crucial room. We breathed easier, once by that. But a difficulty developed over the proposed laboratory. My mother said it was "criminal"—that was her very word—to have chemical fumes on the same floor with a baby's nursery. The rooms actually adjoined one another, making it much worse. The laboratory, if it was necessary at all to have such a nonsensical mess in a house, would have to be in the unoccupied room above. How Helen could in any event tolerate such a thing was beyond my mother's power to see. I was liable to burn the house down at any moment. If we were incapable of thinking for ourselves, we might at least occasionally think of the baby. The whole concluded with a peroration on my lack of any

sense of responsibility. That had always been the curse of the Jevons side of the family. We humbly expressed our eagerness to put the laboratory upstairs.

"Why the devil did I tell her about that blasted laboratory?" I whispered to Helen as we went down into the garden. Outside we paused before the spacious kennel inhabited by the genial Sir Leonidas de la Patte Jaune. His welcome spread from ear to ear.

"This spot has been especially earmarked for Leonidas," I said to my mother, with a wink at Helen.

"Ted, what absurd words you use at times," my mother said. "I can't see what attraction there is about that wretched animal. It's a loathsome yellow cur. If you are going to have a dog, for God's sake get a good one."

"He matches our family crest, mother. On a field vert, a hound souriant, or, enkennelé."

"I'm sure I have no idea what you are talking about, Ted. You are always a *bôre*, like all the Jevonses, when you try to be amusing. The crest is certainly not a yellow dog."

There had been no time, as yet, to do anything to the garden. We stood, therefore, and talked of possibilities rather than of facts. We hoped to afford a tennis court by spring. There was just enough length, with room along the sides for flowers and a vegetable patch at the back. By the dining room window we were meditating a pergola.

"Amateur flowers never grow, or, if they do, they never blossom," announced my mother.

The housemaid rang the dinner gong. Helen and I felt we had now to face the supreme test. Our first dinner party! Helen was probably nervous as we sat down, and I rather wished I knew more about carving. My dear wife, not thinking of me, had ordered ducklings. The soup passed off very well. I had cheated there and brought some out from a caterer's in town.

"Helen makes rather good soup," I remarked, while the

lady of the house cast me an imploring look from the other end of the table.

"It's the best soup I ever tasted," affirmed my father, wishing to be tactful. "Very clever of you, Helen."

Helen blushed crimson, but sat silent.

"You got it at Hickson's," said my mother calmly. "We often have it at home, although no one notices it."

"Ted—" Helen began. My mother cut her short.

"You need not apologize for Ted, Helen. I knew him before you did."

"May I offer an apology for hitting Helen with my boomerang?"

"Do," my mother replied. "It is exceedingly unusual for a Jevons to be aware he owes one."

The ducklings arrived at this point, and I arose to get a firmer grip upon them than was possible from a chair. Delicately I made the first incision, only to discover that ducklings do not respond to delicate treatment. I worked in silence for a time upon number one. Although division into his integral factors accumulated many apparent units, there seemed surprisingly little of him to serve when thus reduced to his lowest terms. Frances giggled.

"You look so funny, Ted," she explained, with sisterly devotion.

"For that you shall have a drum-stick," I retorted.

"I can see nothing funny in watching good food being ruined," my mother said encouragingly. The housemaid standing at my elbow with a plate ready made me nervous.

"It is a curious fact," my mother went on, in a reminiscent mood, "that no Jevons could ever carve. They are the most incompetent men that ever existed."

As I knew for a certainty that the only two Jevonses on earth my mother had ever seen were my father and myself, I wondered whether she was drawing on state documents or simply making a sweeping generalization from two examples. Something told me, however, not to argue this point.

"A duckling," I said, "is an act of God. Steamer tickets and insurance policies specially provide for no liability for such. Even a Jevons is powerless in the face of the handi-work of Providence."

"Sit down, Ted, and let me finish. It makes me ill to see you messing up those ducklings," my mother said. Willingly I changed places. To my secret joy she splashed some gravy on the table cloth. I tried to kick Helen under the table, but all I did was to make an awful crash against one of the complicated gate legs. My mother looked fixedly at me. I did not move a muscle of my face.

"Sorry," I murmured. "I haven't room for my feet."

The fragments of the two ducklings were at last distributed to my mother's satisfaction. The remainder of the dinner was eaten without caustic. Indeed, my mother commended the Burgundy, bought for her particular gratification.

It was, if the truth must be told, with mixed feelings that Helen and I sat down after saying good-bye to the family that evening. The day had been trying for Helen, for it was like being on dress parade before a critic whose motives were kindly, but who was perhaps all the more eager, for that reason, to find mistakes. Never before this week had the child kept house or entertained guests of her own. She could hardly be blamed for uttering a sigh of relief when it was all over. On the other hand, we neither of us knew when we should see any of the family again, for they were leaving England at once. Eager as we had been to be our own masters, we felt the isolation that was now to be ours as almost too literal a response to our prayers. Our circle of friends in town was neither large nor intimate; we had yet to test the resources of our village. Of one thing, however, time had made us absolutely certain. That certainty was concerning the stability of our love. Each week, each day made that firmer and more intense. We lived but for each other; we thought of nothing else. . . .

"Well, Ted," Helen smiled at me, "there is one thing we can do now."

"What is that, dear?"

"Work. We have the leisure we have dreamed about. Let's use it. You shall begin writing your play in the morning." We went to bed very happy.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

WE HEAR SENTENCE PRONOUNCED

THREE years and a few months more went by, not uneventfully for us, yet without any striking change in the happy quiet of our lives in the little Hertfordshire village. We had acquired a few friends, some from London, others from among our neighbours. Week-ends were certain to find our guest room occupied, if we were not ourselves away on a visit elsewhere. There was tennis of a Saturday afternoon, golf, or a walk across the fields by the paths leading Aldenham way. Often we rode horseback, particularly in the autumn, when hounds were out. We were not, however, hunting people, for we could not afford a pair of good hunters; we contented ourselves with riding to the meets on our hired beasts, with a canter through a lane afterwards.

When there was something new on at the theatre, we dined in town, coming home after the performance by the late train. Our gradually increasing circle of friends connected with the theatres made it possible for us to obtain seats for first nights—not always, of course, but for many important openings. We came to know, by sight, at least, the perpetual first night audience of London, its critics, dramatists, and friendly connections. We enjoyed thoroughly whispering and nudging one another: "There's So-and-So," or "look at that dress Mrs. What's-her-Name is wearing." It was our way of joining in the outburst of applause with which it was the custom of the pit to greet the entry of each celebrity. But our theatrical friends were not in this group of big-wigs. We knew the younger generation—players of small parts, recent graduates from the Benson company, dramatists who had

not yet had a West End production, idealistic members of the Stage Society—in fact, mostly the youngsters who believed themselves “advanced.” Perhaps they were; I don’t know. We were keen on Ibsen and smiled pityingly at the mention of Pinero. We were Fabians because of Mr. Shaw. Sometimes we—Helen and I—dabbled a bit in writing dramatic criticism. We began to get some articles accepted. But our greatest fun upon returning from a first night was to sit down and write parodies of the notice we expected to read in the morning in *The Daily Telegraph*. We became quite skilled at this latter art.

During these three years we saw my mother and sister but once or twice, when they came back to London for short visits. My sister was being taken to live now in Paris, now in Rome, and finally in Munich, to follow out a theory of education invented by the family. My father we saw more often, for he came back on periodical visits to look after his business. He preferred, however, his club in town to our more inaccessible village. If we wished to see much of him, we had to go up to London.

The baby had grown to be a constant source of surprise and delight to us. Her conversation was fluent, her interest in the garden intense. In violation of all the proprieties, she sat in a high chair at table with us for breakfast and luncheon. Leonidas also had his special chair in one corner of the dining room, which he mounted at the sounding of the gong and remained in until his own plate was carried out to his kennel. The baby and Leonidas were most astonishingly good pals. He would tolerate liberties at her hands that no one else dared venture upon. The worst ordeal of the day for Leonidas was to take tea with the dolls. With a napkin tied under his chin, he was compelled to occupy a place at the dolls’ tea-table and sit there immovable until the ceremony was over. No Christian martyr ever had a more expressive countenance; yet he, like the martyrs, did not question the necessity for his sufferings. The lump of sugar which signalized the close of

each day's tea-party would send Leonidas galloping in frenzied circles about the garden in joy over his regained freedom.

Our income was increasing, not to make us rich, but to keep pace with the things we enjoyed doing. In the first place, there were the modest profits of our share in the Willesden factory—a sum which about covered ordinary living expenses, clothes, and theatre tickets. Then there was Helen's allowance, which we used for horseback riding, week-end trips, old books, and little luxuries. From time to time we sold a manuscript—money which it particularly delighted us to earn. The great play had not yet been written; yet we were still hopeful that the future would bring us that. Several drawers of manuscript plays were beginning to accumulate. Last of all, a sheer piece of financial luck befell us.

A friend who was a solicitor in the City, had a client interested in chemical patents. I was casually asked one day to write a report on one of these patents. Helen and I worked out a document one evening, after messing about for a few days in the laboratory upstairs, sent it to the solicitors, and thought no more about it. To our surprise we received a check for fifty guineas a few days later, together with a request for reports on other patents. We embarked cautiously on the career of consultant, for, although the fees were tempting, we both feared being taken again from our writing and reading. We set a limit to the time to be given to this new work, not thinking it right wholly to refuse such a gift at fortune's hands. These occasional fees put us beyond any fear of financial worry. Helen refused, on the other hand, to let me open an office in the City. As long as the clients were willing to submit work to me at home, well and good. My mornings, she insisted, should be kept free for writing. Thus our days were very full and very happy.

We made a few trips to the Continent on our own account. The consulting fees made these easily possible. We went to Paris and Rouen, to the French Channel watering places, through Normandy, Holland, and Belgium—all at different

times. We were never away longer than ten days, on account of the baby, and often not more than the week-end. In the same way I took Helen to see more of England, until, like me, she soon came to look upon England as home. Memories of Deep Harbor, in spite of weekly letters from her father and mother, were growing dim. There was no question of home-sickness; instead, I could see the love of England in her eyes as we rode between the Hertfordshire hedgerows or chatted with our friends at tea time in the garden.

There was but one thing that troubled me; in spite of our outdoor life and quiet habits, the climate did not always agree with Helen. In the winter she had too many heavy colds; in the spring her cough lingered longer than I liked. It was in June, when we were entering upon our fourth year in the village, that I asked a doctor in town to come out and have a special look at her. She had been a little languid, a most unusual thing for her, and the cough still hung on. The local practitioner, an amiable man harassed with overwork, had made light of it.

"Your soil is a bit clayey," he had said. "It would be better if you were on gravel, but it's nothing. Keep on with your riding; it will soon pass away."

It hadn't. That is why I sent for the London man. I waited downstairs for his verdict. He came in smiling, after half an hour, and I could feel my heart leap at the sight of his cheerful face.

"I don't think it's anything," he said. "Come, we won't believe it is," he added, and a strange icy chill went through me, leaving me speechless and physically helpless. I had just strength to grasp a chair. "I shouldn't say anything to her about it," he added—"at least, not for the present. I've taken a sample of her sputum and will have it analyzed, just to make certain. Still, I can't believe it."

"Believe what?" I gasped, my voice breaking in spite of my efforts at self-control.

"Now don't you worry, old man. We've caught it early,

if it is anything—that's the main thing. There is a dull spot on one of the lungs that will bear a bit of watching."

I think it was the first time in my life I have ever felt sheer, absolute terror. My thoughts were raging like a madman's. I could not speak a word, try as I would.

"Buck up, old chap," he said, looking curiously at me. "Take a drop of brandy. You mustn't let Mrs. Ted see you like that." We were old friends, this doctor and I, for he had been the family specialist in town for years. "The main thing is not to worry or let her worry. Mind, not a word to her until I tell you."

Helen came in at this point, looking her own sweet self, with a smile upon her face. She had never looked so beautiful to me in her life.

"Ted, the doctor says you are a silly old goose to worry about me. I'm quite all right. He's prescribed a tonic. In a few days I'll be as well as ever. Would you like a cup of tea, doctor, before you go? Do stay. We can give you dinner later if you will."

"Thanks very much, I must be off. Other patients to see in town, you know. You are very kind."

I detected in the doctor's manner a desire to get away quickly, which I did not believe was wholly dictated by professional motives. "That man believes more than he has told me," I thought, "and he is not easy about this case." The baby toddled in to see the guest.

"Hasn't she grown wonderfully since you saw her, doctor?" said Helen, picking the baby up in her arms.

"Er—yes," said the doctor. "Er—I shouldn't lift any heavy weights, if I were you—not just for the present, you know."

Helen put the child down, with the slightest shadow in her eyes. Something impelled me, at this, to rush to Helen's side and put my arm about her. We stood facing the doctor, almost defiantly.

"I think I'll have a try for the 4.50—by the way, I suppose

you'll be in town, both of you, for the horseshow at Olympia next week?"

"Of course," said Helen; "we never miss that."

"Look in at my office as you pass by. Don't fail. Good-bye," and he was off.

Helen took the baby to the nurse and came back to me. She put her hands on my shoulders, and said: "Now, Ted, tell me what the doctor told you. No fibs, please, sweetheart."

I looked at her grey eyes and had to fight to keep the tears out of my own.

"We neither of us know for certain yet, my wife dear. He's having your sputum analyzed."

"Can you analyze it, Ted?"

"No, dear. I know nothing of physiological chemistry—and I haven't a proper microscope for that work."

"Ted," she said, sitting down in her favourite chair, "I'm not going to give in, whatever happens." She shut her lips with something of the decision I had often noted in her father's face.

"Dearest, we must *not* make mountains out of molehills. Wait until we know."

"No, Ted, we must think. There's the baby to consider—as well as ourselves."

I sat down beside her and held her tight. She was quite dry-eyed.

"Ted, if anything should happen—I said, sweetheart, *if* anything should happen, I want you to make me a promise."

"Yes," I said.

"Promise me that you will always take care of the baby. Don't let any one else take her away. She is to stay with you—and it is you, and only you, who can make her happy."

"I promise," I whispered, burying my head in her lap.

"And now, Ted dearest, we are to go on just as before until we see the doctor next week. I'm going up to dress for dinner. Will you telephone for the horses to be brought round in the morning? Not before ten."

“Very well, dear.”

She waved her hand gaily at me from the door, sending me a smile and blowing a kiss with the tips of her fingers.

A week later we reported at the doctor’s sanctum. He greeted us cordially, and I could not decide from his manner what answer he had for us. Carefully and methodically he sounded Helen. It made me shiver to see the quiet remorseless way his stethoscope travelled over her beautiful bare shoulders and breast. I cursed my ignorance that told me nothing of what result he was reaching.

“There,” he said at last, “I don’t think we need to be alarmed. Put on your dress, little girl, and wait downstairs for your husband, will you? I want just a word with him about what he is to do for you.”

Helen obediently dressed and went. The doctor followed her to the door, saw her downstairs, and returned to me. I sat frozen in my chair.

“Ted,” he said, examining some instrument on his desk, “there were tubercular bacilli in her sputum.”

I continued to sit in silence. The room was growing hazy, and I could not struggle to any words.

“We’ve got the case in an early stage—so early, in fact, that I don’t even yet say the diagnosis is final. With open-air treatment, she should be well again in a year. But you’ll have to be careful with her. You must leave England in September.”

“Leave England,” I said mechanically, my tongue sticking to my throat, making it difficult to speak. “Where are we to go?”

“Up the Nile—Assuam is a good place—or out to the desert; say your own Southern California.”

“Egypt or California?” I echoed, like a ventriloquist’s puppet.

“Meanwhile, live in the open all you can—but no violent exercise. Don’t let her ride or play tennis. A little gentle walking; nothing more.”

I got to my feet. "Doctor, I want to know the truth. What chance have we?"

"Why, the best of chances. The will to win, that will do it, Ted. Keep your nerve and don't let her be frightened. Cures are often made, at this stage." He added: "I'm going to have more analyses made. It's still possible we are wrong."

"Are you certain we can fight it off?"

"Absolutely certain, if you follow instructions. Will that satisfy you?"

"I don't want to be satisfied. I want the truth."

The doctor walked up and down the room for a moment or two.

"Ted," he said slowly, turning to me, "I'm a doctor, not a prophet. Cures are possible with modern treatment. I can't say more. She is young, has lived a good, clean life, and has a good physique. Everything possible is in her favour. Don't leave her too long downstairs, or she may worry."

I groped toward the door, the doctor close at my elbow.

"Remember, Ted, that cheerfulness is our most important ally. Whatever you feel, don't let her see you anything but cheerful. By the way—" he paused.

"What?" I asked.

"She ought not to kiss her baby or be too close to it."

He studied the monogram on his cigarette case, then offered me a cigarette. I pushed it away. I could see Helen's face in my imagination, when I should tell her she could not kiss her own baby.

"You know," the doctor went on jerkily, "you ought to be careful yourself. Keep away as much as you can—at least, separate bedrooms."

I looked at him. He shrugged.

"It's my duty to warn you—that's all," he said, holding out his hand. "And keep her out of crowds—no horseshow—no theatres."

I think I said good-bye; perhaps I thanked him for his

kindness, but I have no recollection of anything further until Helen and I stood outside his house, with the June sunshine pouring down on us. I tried to smile at her as I saw her grey eyes fixed on mine. It was rather a ghastly attempt.

"I want to know everything, Ted. Don't keep anything back."

I told her as gently as I could, while we continued to walk along Harley Street without noticing where we were going.

"Ted, I'm going to fight—and fight hard. I won't be beaten! I won't!"

For just a second I thought she was going to break down. I should have known my Helen better.

"We must go home and make plans, dear. Call a hansom."

I looked about. We were just emerging in the Marylebone Road, or was it Euston Road? Things danced a bit before my eyes, but I waved my stick. A hansom drew up beside us.

"Euston," I said, helping Helen in.

At home I propped Helen up in a Madeira chair in the garden while we were waiting for tea. I went into the house to get our bank passbook, for there was need to find out where we stood financially. I paused as I saw Helen with wistful eyes watching her baby playing about the garden. The flowers made bright patches of color; overhead the sun and sky were glorious with an English June. The world seemed such a beautiful place—there sat a beautiful mother watching her baby at play—"Why? why?" I asked, "why to us?" No answer came, then or since. I went into the house.

Our finances proved to be in fair shape. We had enough laid by to take us overseas if we were not extravagant travellers. The income from the factory and Helen's allowance would keep us comfortable, even granting considerable addition to our living expenses. In any event, there were two generous families to lend help. It is curious, perhaps, that at first we talked only of practical problems. The reason

was that we were both so determined to fight, we thought of nothing except immediately planning our campaign. We would let the house furnished. It was the most sensible thing to do, although the first tears came to Helen's eyes when she spoke of strangers using our treasures.

After tea we wrote letters to both families. There remained the question of where to go in September. Again we took an immediate decision, or rather Helen did. She felt uncertain about carrying the baby to Egypt. Neither of us had been there, and we did not know what Assuam might be like. As for California, while it was equally a strange country to us, it was at least America, and we should be, in a measure, at home. We put postscripts to our letters, announcing southern California as our destination in September. We dined in the garden and sat late under the stars, her hand in mine.

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Although we spent the whole summer in the garden, or taking short walks along the field-paths near by, Helen began to lose strength. She seemed quite unaware of it herself, for each day her word to me was that she felt much better. And, mindful of the doctor's constant injunctions to me to be always cheerful in her presence, I had to pretend that I, too, thought her steadily improving. The doctor began to speak of the benefit a change of climate would bring, by which I saw that he inwardly admitted there had been no amendment. But he buoyed us up with hope and optimism, telling us marvellous tales of cures that the American desert had wrought. Almost our whole anguish was at the thought of leaving our little home; as yet neither of us had had our confidence at all shaken. On the contrary, so optimistic is youth, we had in considerable degree recovered from our first grief. We knew we were fighting, perhaps with our backs to the wall, but we did not doubt we should win. It was when I was alone that doubt would sometimes steal in. For example, that walk Helen took easily last week, she could not finish yesterday—what did it

mean? But I fought against doubt for her sake, well knowing that she would instantly detect any signs of it in me. I strove not to think at all, but to minister each day to Helen's comfort and happiness, leaving tomorrow out of the account.

Packing up and closing the house was the hardest for Helen to bear. In spite of the fatigue of climbing stairs, she went with me from room to room for one last look. We were saying good-bye to home alone because our letters to my family had been so optimistic they fancied we were merely going away for the winter. They wrote that they would come to visit us in the spring upon our return. My father had sent a check, and Mr. Claybourne had cabled he would meet us in New York. So it came that we left our house as we had entered it, alone.

At the station many kind friends came down to see us off, loading Helen with flowers. The baby was in great form, for the excitement of travel was new to her. I think it was the worst wrench of all for Helen to leave Leonidas, although dog-loving friends were keeping him for us. Poor Leonidas! the last thing we saw from the train window was the diminishing wags of his tail, as he stood wondering on the platform. For the first time since the doctor's diagnosis, Helen cried, leaning against my shoulder as our train rushed toward Liverpool. But she soon stopped, for little Helen started crying too when she saw "mummy dear" in tears. Nurse sat up, rather grim, trying to keep the child amused. I wondered how much nurse guessed or knew.

"It doesn't seem possible, Ted, that our happy life is over," Helen whispered, looking out of the carriage window. "The home we had fixed up for ourselves and were going to live in always—why should it happen to us, Ted? Why?"

It was the same question I had asked myself in the garden.

"We'll come back in June," I said. God knows whether I thought it a lie or not.

"In June, Ted. We must. It's—it's hard to be—brave, Ted, isn't it? But I won't give in! I won't!"

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We reached New York after a gloomy, foggy September passage. Mr. Claybourne met us at the dock, accompanied by a Miss Brock, a trained nurse, who was to travel with us to California. We paused in New York only long enough to consult another tuberculosis specialist. This man also expressed hope, sending us on our way rejoicing. Another halt of twenty-four hours was made at Deep Harbor, to see Helen's mother.

It was a strange sensation to step off the limited at the familiar old station which we had left under such different circumstances. Before us lay State Street, with its trolley cars and soft coal smoke, not much altered. Yet the mere sight of Deep Harbor lowered my spirits as nothing else had done. I don't know why this was so. In spite of all I could do, deep depression seized me as we drove to the Claybourne residence on Myrtle Boulevard. I think Helen felt it, too, for her hand rested on mine the whole way. Mr. Claybourne was busy with his new granddaughter, whom he had deliberately spoiled from the time he first saw her on the dock at New York. She was chattering away to him, as we drove along, in a pronounced English nurse-girl accent, a habit that gave Mr. Claybourne unending delight. I think the trace of English in Helen troubled him a little. After over four years it was not surprising that Helen had acquired a few English mannerisms and tricks of speech. Her slang, indeed, was quite up to date. I had seen him look at his daughter more than once as if he felt that she had drifted far away during the four years and over of her married life. I wonder myself how it would seem if Helen had been away a long time from me and returned with strange speech and ways. I wanted to tell him she was a more splendid and wonderful woman than she had ever been.

I dreaded the meeting with Mrs. Claybourne. I feared her tears and wailings would have a depressing effect on Helen. Mrs. Claybourne was constitutionally unable to look upon any but the gloomiest side of things. What would happen now she had good cause for sorrow? I had already warned Mr. Claybourne that only cheerfulness was to be about Helen, hoping he

would shield her from Mrs. Claybourne's worst. As I expected, we were met with tears, to which, however, Mr. Claybourne put a sudden and decided stop. It was possible to bully Mrs. Claybourne, I observed with satisfaction.

After luncheon Miss Brock took Helen upstairs for a rest. Mr. Claybourne and I faced one another, each equipped with one of the oily black cigars I remembered so well.

"Ted, I haven't tried to ask many questions with Helen around. What are our chances in this thing?"

"God! I wish I knew," I answered.

He smoked his cigar a while, staring out the window at the passersby on Myrtle Boulevard, much as he had done the first time I told him I loved his daughter.

"I don't need to ask if you and Helen have been happy," he went on, still gazing at the street. "I saw that in her eyes when you brought her off the boat."

"No two people could have been—happier," I murmured, my voice losing a little of its steadiness in spite of me.

"I know, Ted. Yes, I think I know—you see, she's all I have, too."

I could not reply; he was looking fixedly out the window.

"I can't come with you, Ted; my business ties me here. And I won't let Mrs. Claybourne go with you—I guess you know why. Don't spare expense—no matter what it is. Get the best specialist and the best of everything for her. If you run short, simply call on me." He fumbled in a pocket book. "Here is a draft on a Los Angeles Bank. Deposit it as a reserve fund."

I was surprised to see that his eyes, like mine, were wet when he handed me the draft. Then he smiled: "We mustn't lose our nerve, Ted. Go out there and fight for that girl," and he gripped my hand.

The next day we began our long journey across the Continent. We had several hours to wait in Chicago before the Santa Fé limited left in the evening. We hired an open cab

and drove for an hour along the lake front of that amazing city. Helen took her old, eager childish delight in seeing something new. Her eyes danced as I had not seen them dance for weeks. We astonished passersby by halting our cab to stare upward at sky-scrappers or to peer from alongside the curb at luxurious shop windows.

"They wonder what curious brand of country folks we are," I laughed with her.

"Ted!" Helen exclaimed, clutching my arm, "there's one of those wonderful American candy shops—do buy me some chocolates."

Again I laughed at the blend of the two countries in her remark. The cab was stopped once more and a box of chocolates added to our luggage. In our delight over sight-seeing together, we forgot for a time the shadow hanging over us. It was Miss Brock who brought us to ourselves. Helen was getting dangerously excited. The cabman drove us to our hotel. There we sat in a room looking out over the lake until time to go to our train.

Driving to the station, Helen said: "Let's stop for a day or two in Chicago on our way back next June, Ted. I think it's fun."

On the train Helen and I had a little compartment to ourselves, with another for baby, nurse, and Miss Brock, the trained nurse. Helen insisted at once on playing house and having the baby come as a caller to visit us.

"Ted—just think! We are going across the Continent. It's a real adventure, dear."

"To be anywhere with you is a beautiful adventure," I whispered. It sounded banal, but I meant it.

"Dear old boy, you still pay me compliments after being married to me for ages. And I like them just as much as ever, Ted." She snuggled against me, saying, "Make me comfy, Ted."

In spite of Helen's joy in travel, I found my courage oozing out of me on that train. The tracks stretched so remorselessly and interminably away from the rear carriage, while we went

on and on. Our old life and happiness seemed to be fading far off over many horizons. Ahead of us there was nothing but a strange land and an unknown, perilous struggle. I wondered at the towns we passed through, and if, in each village we went by, there were others fighting the same fears and watching beside their beloveds.

Mother and baby often sat on opposite seats, chattering to each other of the things seen out the window—gee-gees, moo-cows, and all the rest that all mothers show their babies. Little Helen no longer could sit in her mother's lap.

“Daddy,” she asked one day, “why can't I sit in mummy dear's lap any more the way I did in England?”—everything now she compared with England—“and, daddy, why doesn't mummy dear kiss me good-night any more?”

I held little Helen very tight at this, for a pair of grey eyes opposite were staring out the Pullman window.

“Ted,” said the grey eyes slowly, “tell her the truth.”

“Mummy dear is ill, little girl—and the doctor says you mustn't sit in her lap or kiss her until she is quite well again.”

“I want mummy dear to get well quickly, daddy. Tell the doctor to make her well. I want mummy dear to kiss me again.”

“Ted, I'm afraid I'll have—to ask you—to—to take baby back—to nurse,” the grey eyes tried to smile. “I can't stand—everything, dear.”

Helen woke me up the second or third morning—I can't remember which—calling, “Ted, do look at this wonderful country—we are in New Mexico, dear. Look at it!”

I shook myself awake and climbed out of my berth. Helen was sitting in her dressing gown by the window. I noticed that the skin on her throat looked white and waxy. But I came quickly beside her.

“It is like another world out there.”

Sagebrush had begun; in the distance were strange, eerie-looking mountains. Shadows were sharp and hard, with edges

that looked as if they had been trimmed with a jackknife.

"It *is* another planet," I said, as we looked at this weird panorama unfolding before us. "It couldn't have been the same God that made this."

The train stopped with a jerk at some collection of little wooden houses whose gable roofs were squared off by false fronts.

"It's like the Western novels, Ted. Oh, look—there's a real cowboy—by Jove, Ted, he *can* ride!"

A man in leather chaps rode up to the little station and dismounted with a flourish, I suspect for the benefit of the train. There was, however, no doubt that he and a horse were old acquaintances. Helen made me open the window.

"May I give your horse a lump of sugar?" she called to the man. He looked up surprised, then grinned.

"Sure, lady, if I can coax him alongside of the train."

About this the horse was of another opinion. He reared magnificently and struck out with his forefeet.

"I want to ride that horse, Ted."

We compromised by handing the man the lump of sugar to be transferred to the horse. The horse sniffed it disdainfully and spat it out.

"I guess he ain't used to no dainties, lady," the man apologized.

The train whistled, and we were off again. The man swung into his saddle, the horse bolting with him across the desert. We saw him rein him in and turn in his saddle to wave his hat at the train. Helen fluttered her handkerchief out the window.

"Couldn't we take a Western pony back with us, Ted? I think we can almost afford it."

"If you want one, dear."

"I'd make a sensation on a horse like that at a meet of the Old Berkeley East hounds."

"I think his carelessness with his forefeet would bar him out," I replied.

California at last. The train climbed over a range of the

curious mountains, and then coasted down into a wide, flat plain set with groves of trees.

"Orange trees, Ted!" Helen exclaimed.

"Something like the Riviera," I said, a bit doubtfully. I wasn't quite certain this country was what we had expected. We looked anxiously at the towns, to see what they were like. I think each of us had a little the feeling we were making the best of what we saw for the others' benefit. The towns were —well, still like other Western small towns. The main streets were a hodge-podge of rural-looking shops. From a train they were not attractive.

"Of course," I said, "Los Angeles is a large city with magnificent suburbs—we mustn't expect the fruit-growing sections to be very home-like."

"I wonder, Ted? Suppose we don't like it here?"

"Nonsense," I answered stoutly. "Think of all the fine things we have heard about California."

It was dusk when the train arrived at Los Angeles. The hotel reassured us, for it was comfortable, and we were pleasantly received. In the morning I was to begin my search for a bungalow—one right out on the desert, if there were such things here as desert bungalows. I went to bed with a shade of anxiety concerning the recommendation of the London doctor. I had seen nothing yet to make me think this a particularly good place for an invalid.

A house agent took me in tow in the morning. We went first to Pasadena, a beautiful place, as I admitted to the agent, but far too town-like and civilized for our purposes. The agent had much to say about the Californian climate; I had quite a fund of information on this subject before I had done with him. I forget now his statistics: the number of days of sunshine, the number of inches of rain, the number of cool nights in summer. I likewise have forgotten his commercial statistics concerning the thousands of carloads of oranges—"citrus fruits," I believe he called oranges and lemons.

From time to time I reminded him that I was looking for a bungalow. This was necessary, for he preferred to talk of

California at the expense of facts nearer home. "It's the garden spot of the world," he exclaimed ecstatically from time to time—"the sun-kissed valleys of California."

"What I am looking for is a sun-kissed bungalow in your garden spot, old thing," I remarked about two o'clock. "We haven't found one yet."

He pulled himself together, and we followed another clue out in Altadena. As we neared the great range of the Sierra Madre mountains, I felt, as children say, we were "getting warm." They towered crisp and clear, like theatrical scenery, and their lower slopes lay pleasantly exposed to the sun. The agent protested that I would find it unpleasant to live so far out.

"What is one near, if one lives further in?" I asked, not unkindly.

I was almost ready to return to Los Angeles with the resolve of seeking another agent on the next day, when we really came across a charming little bungalow standing all by itself on irrigated land. The agent was contemptuous; the locality was not fashionable; he had many other objections. Overhead the mountains fairly hung upon us. All around was open land, unbuilt upon. The house itself was new, comfortable, and of the right size. To the agent's disgust and the landlord's amazement, I paid a month's rent in advance, upon the spot, and with my own hands took down the "For Rent" sign.

One difficulty developed at the last moment.

"Your wife isn't a lunger, is she?" the landlord inquired.

"A what?" I asked.

"Lunger. Has she got T. B.? Because, if she has, I don't want her in no house of mine. Can't rent a bungalow out here after any one has died of tuberculosis in it."

"My wife is only slightly ill."

"They all say that," remarked the landlord.

"Will you let me have it for more rent?"

"No—but I'll sell it, young man."

We dickered a while and at last struck a bargain. I could not draw from the agent any opinion concerning a fair price.

I had to trust to luck that I wasn't being unreasonably cheated. It was a top price, I knew, but Helen could not stay in a hotel in Los Angeles. A sum down, including a check, served to clinch the bargain. There remained only to buy some cottage furniture and install it.

On the way back the agent tried to hold me up for a commission.

"You'll collect your commission from your friend, the landlord," I replied firmly. We let it go at that.

Three days later I got enough furniture into the place to enable us to move in. My three days of preparation involved a great deal of strenuous urging. But it was done at last, even to a floored tent behind the bungalow for Helen and me to sleep in. We had likewise a cook, a protesting coloured woman from Texas, who swore many strange oaths that she had never seen any one in such a mighty hurry as I was. A special bribe got her from under the nose of some of Pasadena's élite who were besieging the employment agency.

It was late in the afternoon when Miss Brock and I carried Helen from the carriage to a long chair on the verandah and propped her up with pillows. The baby had already begun to play about the bungalow. Inside we could hear the cook talking to her pots and pans as if they were sentient beings in league against her. By the verandah stood two orange trees in blossom. The breeze stirred slightly in their branches, carrying a whiff of their sweet, sickly scent to my nostrils. I started with a shudder, for I remembered how I had always hated the scent of orange blossoms from the time I first met the flower girl under the archway of Charing Cross station. Could this be why I disliked that odour? Was I to learn the reason at last? Helen was holding my hand, resting quietly, for the journey had tired her. I saw her look at the mountains and from them to her baby at play.

"Ted," she said, so faintly I had to lean forward to hear, "I want to go home—to our own little house in Hertfordshire. Take me back, Ted. I'm homesick."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

WE STAND AT THE CROSS-ROADS

THE next day we procured a specialist from Los Angeles to come out and examine Helen. He was an elderly man with white hair and whiskers, together with what I thought were objectionably brusque manners. I was partly reassured by the speed and skill with which he worked—"the old devil is efficient for all his rudeness," I thought. I had a documentary history of the case, prepared by our doctor in London. This I gave him. He stuffed it into his pocket without so much as glancing at it. He spoke sharply once or twice to Miss Brock because that young woman did not move quickly enough to suit him. To Helen he said almost nothing beyond asking a half dozen brief questions. When he had finished—he was about an hour at it, all told—he turned to me and said: "Come to my office to-morrow, Mister—let's see, what is your name? ah, yes, Jevons"—(consulting his notebook). "I'll give you my opinion of your wife's case then. Here's the card of a local doctor—a good man. Use him. I'll come out again, if you wish or your doctor sends for me. Good morning." He was off without waiting for further reply.

"Ted, he's a beast," Helen exclaimed. "Don't let him near me."

I tried to explain that a great scientist and expert perhaps lost, in time, some of his human touch. His reputation we knew to be supreme in his field; it was best to take him as we found him.

"I shan't worry about his manners, sweetheart, while he is curing you," I concluded.

I went in to Los Angeles the next morning to call at the doc-

tor's office. The waiting room was full of all sorts and conditions of men and women, seated on chairs around the four walls. I stood, for there were no more empty chairs. A young lady, the doctor's secretary, took my card and laid it on her desk.

"The doctor is engaged just now," she said. More arrived, but none was shown into the doctor's office. I stood, my heart beating wildly, almost frenzied by the delay. The door opened, and the old physician looked into his waiting room. He beckoned to a lady in a far corner. She arose and went toward him. In my anxiety, I forgot all etiquette.

"Doctor!" I pleaded. "One moment."

"What is it?" he turned, vexed. "Can't you wait your turn?"

"Just a word and then I'll wait all day, if necessary."

"Well?"

"My wife—you examined her yesterday—can you tell me—?" I stumbled over my words.

"Let's see—what name?"

"Mrs. Jevons," I answered.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Jevons—that case." He spoke in a loud tone of voice. All the waiting room was listening.

"There's absolutely no hope, Mr. Jevons. I don't think she will live three months. Good morning."

"No—no—hope! Doctor!" I knew my voice was breaking, and I could feel the eyes of all those sitting there upon me.

"You came too late," he said. "What's the use of coming out here with a case in its last stages? There's no hope."

He went into his room, followed by the woman patient, and banged the door. I stood stunned, dazed, so weak I did not trust myself to take a step; and still the eyes from all around the room stared at me. "You God damned brute!" I muttered under my breath, "God damn your dirty soul!" and staggered toward the doctor's closed door. Then I paused. "After all," I thought, "why should we matter to him?" A great rage against the others sitting there seized me. Had they no decency

to stare at me like that? I stiffened. "I won't give them any more show for their money, the loathsome hounds," and I went to the secretary's desk to pay the fee. I was surprised to note that I counted out the bills with a steady hand. She handed me a receipt.

"I am sorry, Mr. Jevons," she said, so the others could not hear.

I looked at her blankly a moment. "Thank you."

In the street I had to lean against the wall of an office building for a time, for there was no strength in my legs. A policeman came from the centre of the street.

"What's the matter, young fellow? Sick?"

"Just a momentary faintness," I answered. "I'm all right, really."

"Well, go in there and get yourself a drink."

I saw him pointing with his club at a nearby café. I got there somehow and sat down at a little table.

"What's yours, bud?" the bartender called with a great assumption of joviality.

"A glass of sherry," I gasped. He brought it and set it before me. I saw him preparing for a pleasant chat.

"I'm very sorry," I said, "but would you mind not talking to me? I—I've got some business to think out."

"Oh, have it your own way," he replied, deeply offended, and returned behind his bar.

There was just one problem in my mind. What was I to say to Helen? Should I tell her the truth? Ought I to tell her? Three months, or less, the doctor had said. Could I make her happy for those three months? Was that not better than telling her? But would she guess? Could I keep it from her? Should I be able to play my part? Back and forth these questions raced in my mind. No answer came, for either choice seemed wrong. Helen and I did not lie to each other. But this was a different kind of lie from any mere vulgar deception. Had she the right to know?

"Say, if you're going to sit there all day, how about a little action?"—this from the bartender.

"Oh, hell," I exclaimed, "bring me anything you like—or have it yourself on me."

"Thanks, I'll take half a dozen cigars," he said, rattling a box. "Damned if you aren't a queer guy. From the East, I guess."

"Yes—but please do me the favour to keep still."

"I'm not trying to butt in on nobody," he muttered, aggrieved again. "And I'm good enough to talk to any stuck-up Eastern guy that comes along."

As I disappointed him by ignoring this last remark, he took refuge in polishing glasses. I was conscious of a distant rumbling inside him from time to time. But I did not dare go back to Helen until I had got control of myself again. Furthermore, I must make up my mind about what I was to tell her. There seemed no way in which I could force my thoughts into an orderly arrangement. Little glimpses of our life together—of all we had done and planned in the last four years—kept interposing themselves between me and the present. "Helen—Helen—my Helen—my wife," was ceaselessly echoing inside my head. Finally a resolve came to me. "I can't tell her," I said to myself—"right or wrong, I can't."

I went to the telegraph office and sent a message to Mr. Claybourne. Then I took the long journey back to our bungalow. Helen was sitting on the verandah when I got there, the baby riding a hobby-horse near her, and Miss Brock reading aloud. Helen's face was thin now, but she had lost none of her delicate beauty. I went up to her and kissed her.

"What did the doctor say, Ted dear? How long you have been."

"He says it is all right, sweetheart. I am bringing good news." I wondered that the lie did not choke me.

"Honour bright, Ted?" she exclaimed, her eyes lighting up. It was our one oath of truthfulness that she demanded of me. Never before had I violated it.

"Honour bright, Helen precious."

"Ted, isn't it glorious! I feel better already. Will it be in June?"

I kneeled in front of her chair and hid my face in her lap.
"Why, Ted! I believe you are crying!"

I clung to her hand.

"Dear old boy, Ted. I love you," she leaned over me and whispered.

• • • • •

The local practitioner confirmed the opinion of Dr. Krehstadt, the specialist. He and I, with Miss Brock, held a council-of-war while Helen was taking her afternoon nap next day.

"Why in the name of heaven did the doctors in London and New York talk so optimistically to us?" I asked him, for he was a pleasant-spoken young man with friendly blue eyes. He shrugged.

"Perhaps," he hazarded, "they thought it important to keep your courage up. Or it is possible"—and he hesitated—"I hate to say this of my colleagues—yet it may be they wished to pass you along. I don't say it was the reason in your case, Mr. Jevons, but I have known it to have been done with other tubercular cases sent out here."

"What have you thought, Miss Brock?" I turned to the trained nurse. She was a level-headed, taciturn person, with a quiet way of always doing her work exactly as expected of her. It suddenly occurred to me I had not asked her opinion before.

"I have had a good deal of experience with tuberculosis patients, Mr. Jevons. I confess I have been worried about Mrs. Jevons since I first came into the case."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Well, Mr. Jevons—I'm not a doctor. It's not my business to offer opinions or to make a diagnosis. Besides, Mr. Jevons—seeing you with Mrs. Jevons every day, who could tell you? I've seen a lot of death and suffering in my hospital work—I thought I was callous. I guess I'm not."

A grey cloud caught on the summit of one of the mountains and spread along below the topmost ridge. I watched it slowly blotting out the crest of the range.

"Do you object if I smoke?" the doctor inquired.

"No—pray do," I said. I felt tired, old—as if youth had suddenly left me. Miss Brock got up and went into the house.

"Doctor," I pleaded again. "Is there anything we can try—however new or experimental—whatever the risk, as long as it offers just one chance—one?"

He shook his head. "I know of nothing, Mr. Jevons, that will cause new lung tissue to grow."

I knew my question was hopeless; I had read the best medical works on tuberculosis since this had come to Helen, but one struggles for a gleam of hope to the end.

"She has had no pain—or very little; no haemorrhages. That, too, misled us."

"There are many cases like your wife's," the doctor said. "Simply a gradual wasting away and loss of strength."

"I can't reason it out, doctor. It isn't fair."

He shifted in his chair, knocking the ash from his cigar.

"If you were a doctor, Mr. Jevons, you would come across a lot of things you couldn't reason out—that aren't fair. But they happen."

"Yes," I said. "I suppose, like everybody, we think our own case the only important one in the world. But it does not make it any easier to know there are others suffering as we suffer. I am not fond of seeking that kind of sympathy. I say it's a damned unfair thing all round."

"I'm afraid, Mr. Jevons, that Nature cares nothing for the individual."

The doctor threw away his cigar and held out his hand.

"I'll look in every day, Mr. Jevons—but there isn't much I can do."

"How long?" I faltered, as he went toward his horse and buggy.

"It's hard to say—something depends, of course, on her natural vitality." He stood, choosing words. "I don't believe you will lose her until after Christmas."

The word rang in my head, as I watched him drive away.

How many Christmas days had we planned, years ago in Deep Harbor? And now—I could think no longer.

Miss Brock appeared in the door. "Mrs. Jevons is awake. She wants to see you."

"I'm coming." My Helen—my Helen—I could feel the blood beating against my temples on the way to her tent.

• • • • •

November, the beginning of December—I checked the days off. Helen could not stir from her chair now—the dark circles were deepening under the grey eyes—the cheeks that once glowed on horseback in the winter fields of Hertfordshire were white and drawn in the warm California sunshine.

It was pain, agony, to look at her, and yet I laughed and joked with her, between our love-making, as we had always done. For, strangest thing of all, Helen thought she was getting better. The first day she discovered that walking was too great an effort, I was terror-stricken, thinking, "Now she will guess." But no, she attributed it merely to some passing phase—to being overtired—and her gentle good humour and faith were as steadfast as ever. She noticed that she coughed more, and that the coughing spells left her exhausted. Nevertheless she attributed even that to the normal progress of the disease toward its cure. Thus each day made it more certain than ever that I could not tell her the truth.

There were many nights that I lay awake in our tent, beside Helen, and fought this question over again and again. To this day I have not found the answer. Would she have more directions to give me about the baby, if she knew, I wondered? and several times this thought nearly forced me to speak. Would it be right to let her leave her baby without a word about her future? Then, when morning came, Helen would talk to me about going home in June, or make plans for doing something to our house in Hertfordshire, and I could not speak.

Christmas day came, after great preparations on our part to observe it as we always had. There was a tree for the baby, and I ransacked Los Angeles for things to please Helen, or

other trifles to make her laugh. The coloured genius of the kitchen cooked a marvellous turkey. We had a plum pudding all the way from England. Dinner was served on a little table before Helen's tent. Miss Brock allowed Helen to eat some of the white meat of the turkey. Hand in hand Helen and I sat watching the baby's joy in her heap of new toys.

"Our Christmas, Ted. It's our day," Helen whispered, her cheek against mine—her old trick when she was happy or pleased. "Do look at baby, Ted. Isn't she a darling?"

"Mummy dear, Santa Claus brought me a real paint-box, an' brushes, an' pencils, an' paper, an' a book to paint in."

"Isn't that wonderful! Show mummy all your presents."

Baby began bringing them up, one by one, laying them in rows at her mother's feet. A telegraph boy arrived. I snatched the message from him. I had wired Mr. Claybourne a day or two before that time was nearly up. He had foreseen that Helen might read it.

"Coming with mother for a Christmas visit. We leave tomorrow. Love to you three." I showed it to Helen.

"How nice of dad, Ted! I'm so glad he's going to take a holiday. Why didn't they plan to be here today?"

Soon after, she went to sleep, and I sat at her feet, thinking of Christmas. At five the doctor dropped in. I saw Miss Brock talking aside with him by his buggy.

"Don't wake her yet," he said, and led me around to the front verandah. I knew what he meant.

"It may be tonight or tomorrow, Mr. Jevons," he began, as he took his chair. "Miss Brock reports that she has grown markedly weaker in the last twenty-four hours. The excitement of Christmas was not good for her, but I did not want to deprive her of that pleasure. I can stay, if you wish it. There is nothing, however, that I can do. Miss Brock is most competent. I shall be within call, in any event."

"Her father and mother are leaving Deep Harbor to-morrow."

"They will be too late." He said it quite gently, laying his hand upon my knee. I could see him watching me narrowly.

"Go back to her, my boy. I mustn't keep you." He got up and walked down the steps.

In the tent I found Helen just waking up.

"It was—a—beautiful—Christmas—Ted. Why—Ted—I'm awfully—weak."

I gave her a sip of brandy; the doctor had authorized it. Miss Brock came to the tent.

"Will you leave us please?" I asked. "Stay within call with the baby."

Helen was dozing again and did not hear what I said. I put her on her bed and slipped off her dressing gown, tucking her in for the night. The sun was just setting, and the first chill of the California night air sent shivers through me. I put on a heavy overcoat and set my chair beside her bed to wait.

All night I sat there, holding one of her hands. Now and then Miss Brock, with a flash-lamp, came out from the bungalow. I sent her back each time. Helen seemed to sleep quite peacefully. Only once did a fit of coughing rouse her. It was about seven when she opened her eyes and smiled at me.

"I think I'll be able to get up today, Ted," she said, so faintly, yet distinctly. I kissed her. She gave me her hand to hold. As she lay there looking at me with her grey eyes, I saw the expression in them change. Something had come into them that I did not know.

"Miss Brock!" I called.

She stepped in instantly.

"Bring the baby here, will you? Then take her away again." Miss Brock quickly returned with little Helen.

"Good morning, mummy dear," she said.

"Helen—the baby—to say good morning," I whispered in her ear. Helen opened her eyes, looking at me a little puzzled. The strange expression was still there. Slowly she turned her head and looked at the baby.

"Good morning, baby—precious."

I signed to Miss Brock, who took the child away. For a long time yet I sat, holding Helen's hand. She dozed; and

again her eyes would open, with the faintest flicker of her smile upon her lips as she saw me by her. Then she opened her eyes once, and I saw she no longer knew me.

"Helen—my Helen girl—it's Ted—your Ted," I whispered frantically. She gave no sign—but slowly, ever so slowly, the eyes glazed. Her hand was still in mine when I knew the end had come. I looked at my watch on the camp table. Twenty minutes to eleven.

I got to my feet, gently laying the hand I had held on her breast. I stooped and kissed her lips. From the door of the tent I looked back again. She was beautiful. I faced the breeze and the dazzling sunshine without. A heavy scent of orange-blossoms was in the air.

I walked into the living room of the bungalow. Miss Brock sprang to her feet when she saw me come in. She gave me one look and dashed for the tent. I sat down before the empty fire place. Little baby Helen ran to me and climbed into my lap. A pair of grey eyes looked up smiling at me. I think that saved me. . . .

EPILOGUE

Christmas Eve, 1918

“Daddy?”

“Yes, my daughter?”

“Think, daddy, think!”

“My dear, I will—if you’ll tell me what.”

“Tomorrow is Christmas—the first peace Christmas.”

“I know.”

“And daddy!”

“Well?”

“In the spring I shall be eighteen.”

I looked at a tall girl, her cheeks aglow with the frosty crimson which only English winter days can bring. In her hand was a riding crop, and her riding habit sat trim upon her. But it was her grey eyes sparkling fun, and a certain trick of her smile that struck me most. Eyes and smile alike had come straight to her from her mother. “Eighteen,” I thought to myself—“her mother’s age when I first met her. Was she then a laughing child—a baby like this?”

“Come sit by your daddy tonight, Helen,” I said. She flung herself impulsively on a cushion at my feet, her head against my knee.

“Make me comfy.”

I drew her closer to me.

“I had the most glorious ride, today, dad. All through the bridle paths past Aldenham and back by King’s Langley.”

“There are no lanes like our Hertfordshire ones, little girl.”

“I feel as if I were alive again, daddy, now the war is over.”

We sat looking at the fire together—our thoughts, I knew, as far apart as the poles. Our love was the common bond. Deep Harbor—other Christmas days in England—and that

last terrible Christmas day of all—out in California—these and many other things I saw in the firelight.

“And what are you thinking of, Helen?”

Grey eyes looked up at me, smiling a little shyly.

“Do you know what I want for Christmas, dad?”

“Another bull-terrier, dear—or a new saddle?”

She shook her head vigorously.

“So wrong, daddy. Shall I tell you?”

“Please do.”

“You promised once—when I should be old enough to understand—to tell me the whole story of you and—mummy dear. I’ll soon be eighteen. Won’t you tell me this story for my best Christmas present?”

I bent over and kissed her.

“Yes, dear. I’ll tell you. Listen, little girl—” . . .

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